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[HUGH TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS AND HELD HER CLOSE TO HIS HEART.]

THE MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The absence of Isabel Farquhar from London was felt by Hugh Cleveland, as making a very perceptible gap in his life, for he had grown more dependent on her society than he had been aware of.

Nevertheless, on the whole he was glad she was gone, for he had almost grown to fear her wily fascination, and there was a certain sense of relief in being beyond the sphere of its influence. Not, be it understood, that he had in any way forgotten Nathalie, or that she was less to him than she had ever been, but Isabel had contrived to exercise a certain sway over his intellect, although she had entirely failed in her efforts to touch his heart.

Still, his life was certainly duller now that he no longer spent his evenings in De Vere Gardens, and he felt himself sinking into the

same state of despondency into which he had fallen immediately before the commencement of their intimacy.

On the night that Farquhar met with his tragic end, Hugh went to bed with his thoughts naturally dwelling on Nathalie's approaching marriage, which he knew was fixed to take place the next day, and it is small wonder that he should have lain awake for some time thinking of her, or that his dreams—when sleep finally visited him—should have been almost exclusively of the woman he still loved, in spite of her supposed treachery.

Towards morning a dream more vivid than he ever before remembered to have experienced, made a great impression on him. He thought he saw Nathalie, standing at the altar, in the white robes of a bride, that were, however, stained with a deep red mark which he knew to be blood. Her face was pale, her eyes were haggard, and as she saw him, she stretched forth her hands in most pitiful appeal.

"Hugh! Hugh! why are you not here to help me?" He woke up with the cry ringing in his ears, and so vivid had been the vision,

that for some moments he really did not know whether he was sleeping or awake.

He looked round bewilderedly, and his eyes fell on the familiar things in his bedroom, lighted up by the morning sunshine.

"What a fool I am!" he exclaimed, springing up, and preparing for his bath. "The sound of that cry haunts me still."

And it continued to haunt him, although he did his best to laugh himself out of the idea. He had somehow received the impression that Nathalie was in trouble and in need of his help, and it had taken too firm a hold upon him to be lightly shaken off.

As he was sitting at the breakfast table, making a sorry pretence of eating, a sudden notion came to him, and he started up in his excitement.

"I will go and see her married!" he exclaimed aloud. "The church will be free to everyone, and there is no reason why I should not be there."

He took up a time-table, and consulted it. Yes, by setting off at once, he could reach Paddington in time to catch the early train, which would land him at W— at half-past

ten. He could then hire a conveyance, and get to King's Dene before the ceremony commenced.

No sooner had he made this resolve, than—without giving himself time to consider its wisdom—he put on his hat, went out, sprang into a hansom, and half-an-hour later was on his way to the Midlands, wondering whether he was not doing a very foolish thing in thus yielding to a sudden impulse.

However, foolish or not, he would go on with it now; and so, when he reached W—, he took a cab with the most likely-looking horse he could see, and was driven to the village of King's Dene, where he dismissed his driver and walked towards the church.

The aspect of the village struck him; it was excited, but not in the way he had expected to see it. Little groups of men and women had formed in the street, and were talking together, but they all looked solemn and downcast—more as if they were discussing a funeral than anticipating a wedding. There were no flags or triumphal arches, only at one spot a sort of scaffolding had been erected, meant to be covered with flowers and evergreens, but destitute of both, and looking gaunt and unamusing in its nakedness.

Hugh thought once of stopping to ask the meaning of this, but he did not wish to call attention to himself, and so went on until he came to the church. There, to his intense surprise, he found himself confronted by locked doors, and the melancholy sound of the passing bell broke on his ears, instead of the wedding chimes he had fancied would greet him.

A sudden horror fell upon him, and he staggered back in the sunshine and laid hold of the handle of the door for support. Could *Nathalie* be dead, and was the bell tolling for her?

A moment later, and he recovered himself, and looked round to see if there was any one near, whom he could ask for news of what had happened. His eyes fell on an old man digging industriously at a grave, a few paces away, and he went towards him.

"Is not this Miss Egerton's wedding day?" he asked, and the gravedigger looked up from his work, and leaned on his spade, as if preparing himself for a good gossip.

"Is not to have him—but she couldn't very well be married without a bridegroom, could she now?" he responded, with a certain grim humour, that his hearer was in no mood to appreciate.

"Without a bridegroom! What do you mean?"

"Why, haven't you heard what has chanced to the rich London banker that was to have bin her husband?"

"I have heard nothing," impatiently. "I have only just arrived from town. What is it?"

"Why, he was shot last night, and they do say"—lowering his voice, as if fearful lest the tenants of the graves should hear him—"they do say that it was Miss *Nathalie* as murdered him."

"What!"

The old man nodded his head.

"Yes. It's a rum thing to say of a lady, isn't it? But it's true for all that, and directly after the inquest, they'll take her to W— gaol, for everybody expects the jury will bring in a verdict of 'wilful murder,' agen her. It's a sad comedown for the Egertons, but pride must have a fall, and she was allays a proud young 'ooman—that Miss *Nathalie*."

Hugh could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses. *Nathalie*, his haughty, imperious, beautiful love, accused of a crime like this, and in danger of a felon's prison. The thought was horror itself, and yet this man would hardly have imagined it, and therefore it must be true.

It was some moments before he recovered his self-possession; then he left his informant without a word, and strode from the churchyard in the direction of King's Dene, agitated by a thousand strange emotions.

The house looked singularly deserted, and he walked into the hall unchallenged. There he met a footman.

"I want to see Miss Egerton," he said.

The man looked embarrassed, and Hugh took from his pocket a sovereign, and slipped it into his hand.

"Take me to her room, or wherever she is, and I will risk being allowed to enter," he said, quietly, partially understanding the situation.

The gold did not fail of its usual magic, and Hugh found himself outside *Nathalie*'s dressing-room door. There he was confronted by White, who asked him what his business was. When he made known his request, the detective shook his head.

"I cannot let you see her, sir," he said firmly, but just then, an incident happened that took the initiative out of his hand. *Nathalie*, hearing a voice she recognised, had come from her boudoir through the dressing-room, and now stood on the threshold, white and lagged as *Cleveland* had seen her in his dream.

"You have come, Hugh!" she cried wildly, and in that moment she forgot that they had ever parted, she forgot the hard words he had said, the harder things he believed, of her, and only remembering that she loved and trusted him, she flung herself into his arms, weeping hysterically, and quite regardless of the presence of a third person.

White had not altogether dropped the man in the detective, and accustomed as he was to painful scenes, this one touched him deeply in its pathos, which the youth and beauty of *Nathalie* naturally served to heighten. He turned aside, and Hugh, not waiting for any further permission, drew the girl inside the dressing-room, and thence to the boudoir.

"I thought—I felt, you would come to me," she breathed, when they were alone.

Hugh's heart beat quickly. In spite of all, he knew by her present manner that she had never ceased to love him, and the knowledge, even under these miserable circumstances, was like a dawn of life's purest elixir.

"Tell me everything that has happened," he said, taking her hand, and holding it in a strong firm clasp that seemed to strengthen her.

"Yes," she answered, "events have occurred which make it no longer necessary that I should hide anything from you; the seal is removed from my lips now."

And then she told him the whole history of her engagement to *Farquhar*, and the conditions under which it was entered into. At this point he interrupted her.

"Then you loved me all the time, and it was for your father's sake you became *Farquhar*'s promised wife?"

"Yes," simply.

He kissed her with fervent passion.

"Thank Heaven for that! Now go on."

She related every circumstance that had occurred the preceding night, and Hugh looked graver, and still more grave as the recital proceeded, for he saw clearly enough that the circumstantial evidence was, as White had said, terribly against her.

As she finished, *Nathalie* looked at him anxiously—all her doubts, engendered by *Isabel*'s words, had faded into nothingness under the influence of his presence, and she felt now as if nothing had ever happened to interrupt the course of their love.

"*Nathalie*," he said, keeping a firm hold of her hands, and returning her gaze, "if you were weak and frivolous like the generality of girls, I might be tempted to make light of this matter—or at least, try and persuade you that it was not so serious, as regards yourself, as it really is. But I know that you, who have borne the burdens of others, are also capable of bearing your own, and I tell you candidly that things look very black against you. Mind, I do not wish you to think for one moment that you are really in danger of condemnation for a crime of which you are innocent, as there are surely ways of bringing

the guilty to justice; but it is necessary that something should be done without delay towards clearing up the mystery."

They were both silent for some five or ten minutes. *Nathalie* had an implicit faith in Hugh's talent and energy, and already felt as if half her burden had been lifted from her shoulders, while he was quite conscious of the responsibility cast upon him.

"There is no news of my brother and Lady *Lynwood*," *Nathalie* said; "do you think their disappearance has any connection with poor Mr. *Farquhar*'s murder?"

Hugh shook his head. He did not know either *Lionel* or *Adrienne* very intimately, and being unacquainted with their characters, was inclined to put the same construction on their flight as the rest of the world would probably put.

"No," he said, "my opinion is the same as your own, namely, that some enemy of *Farquhar*'s tracked him down here on purpose to execute his murderous design, and the point will be to follow up the slightest clue that may present itself. For that, we shall require the services of a detective."

"Will not some man from W— do?"

Hugh smiled rather contemptuously.

"No; in such a case you want one who is thoroughly accustomed to his work, and not a local celebrity who has rarely had any responsibilities beyond arresting a drunkard, or an apprentice who has robbed his master's till. I think I know a fellow who will do—not a particularly respectable member of society, but as sharp as a needle, and what is more, devoted to his profession. Yes, I don't know than I can do better than telegraph to him to come down at once."

Hugh pulled his watch from his pocket and glanced at it. "It is not much after twelve now, and if I send at once, he will get the message in time to catch the two o'clock down train. By-the-by"—lowering his voice—"do you know for what hour the inquest is fixed?"

"It is to begin at two exactly."

"And will be held here?"

"Yes, in the library."

"You will be called as a witness?"

"So White says, but he also tells me I need not give evidence unless I like."

"But of course you will!" exclaimed Hugh, in alarm. "To decline giving evidence would be almost fatal to you in the present aspect of affairs."

"I am aware of it, so I shall tell everything I know without reserve." She paused a moment, then added, "The coroner's jury will give their verdict on the evidence produced this afternoon?"

"Probably," answered Hugh.

"And it will be one of 'wilful murder against *Nathalie* Egerton'?"

He turned away unable to answer this question. She had spoken quite firmly, and now she laid her hand on his arm, and forced him to look at her.

"I am not afraid, Hugh," she said softly. "Providence will surely protect the innocent, and as a matter of fact, I am far more concerned on my brother's behalf than on my own—if I could only hear that he had returned I should feel, comparatively speaking, at rest. Will you go and make what inquiries you can about him?"

"My poor darling, they would be of no avail. Can't you see, it is the old tale of man's love and woman's weakness, over again?"

"No, no!" she cried, passionately. "I will not—I cannot, believe it! *Lionel* is the soul of honour, and *Adrienne* is purity itself—I would rather believe harm of an angel than of her!"

Hugh looked unconvinced—as he felt.

"I will make what inquiries I can," he said; "but has not your father already done so?"

"Yes, but with a negative result. The only thing he can find out is that a vehicle was waiting some distance outside the lodge gates, and that the people were seen to get in

it and drive away, but as it was dusk, it was impossible to recognise them. He is of opinion that these two were Lionel and Adrienne, while I am sure that further inquiries will prove this not to be the case."

"Well, I will investigate as much as I can, but it will not be this afternoon, for it is imperatively necessary that I should be present at the inquest and hear all that is said, in order that I may form my own opinion upon the manner of the different witnesses, and report it in full to Healy—that is the detective I am going to get down here. And that reminds me, darling, that I must lose no time in sending the telegram, so I will leave you for awhile. Good-bye, my own love, don't lose courage, for I will save you yet."

He took her in his arms and held her close against his heart, and not even the sense of her peril had power to rob the caress of its sweetness, as his lips met hers in one long, passionate kiss.

And it was at this moment that the door was thrown open, and looking up simultaneously, they beheld standing on the threshold—Isabel Farquhar!

CHAPTER XL.

MR. JOSIAH HEALY, the man to whom Hugh Cleveland sent a telegram demanding his presence, was, as the artist remarked, not exactly a respectable member of society; that is to say, he spent a good deal of time and money in public houses, was not unknown in "the ring," and associated with people who could hardly come under the heading of "shabby genteel."

But this was in his idle moments, and when he had just come into possession of a good haul, as the result of some lucky stroke of business. In his business hours, the man was so different that he could hardly have been recognised as the same person. Keen, sober, alert, few things were permitted to escape his notice, and it may almost be said, that for these qualities, joined to an untiring ardour and a wiry physique that never showed signs of fatigue, he stood at the head of his profession.

Like most of us, Mr. Healy had one soft place in his heart, and it was occupied by the orphan son of his dead sister, a young man of three-and-twenty, who was clerk in a city warehouse, and who had lately given him a good deal of trouble, for he had fallen in with bad companions, and as a natural result, had wandered from that strict path of virtue, which his uncle, however widely he himself might diverge from it, desired him to pursue.

It was of this young man he was thinking as he sat in his small, untidy room, on the morning of Hugh Cleveland's departure for King's Dene, and his thoughts, to judge from the frown on his forehead, were not pleasant ones.

The detective was a small, lithe, clean-shaven man, with pale grey eyes, and fair complexion, which, in spite of his mode of living, he had contrived to keep fresh and rosy—his hair inclined to sandy, and there was an innocent, surprised sort of expression on his face, that made people fancy him extremely simple-minded. He had, moreover, a habit of half closing those pale grey eyes of his, and putting his head on one side while meditating, that gave him a curious and comical resemblance to a parrot.

"I wish I could just drop on that Phineas Hyam?" he muttered savagely, after re-reading a letter he had in his hand; "he's ruined a good many men, and he'll ruin this poor lad of mine if I don't look out. I suppose there's nothing for it but to go and see him, and square matters with him this time, at all events."

He took up his hat, and ran his fingers through his hair by way of setting his toilet to rights, and was just on the point of opening the door, when he heard the double "rat-tat" of a telegraph boy downstairs, and a minute later a message was brought him by a small

and extremely dirty female child, who was the "slavey" of the establishment.

He was accustomed to these sort of orange-coloured envelopes, so he opened it with professional coolness, and having mastered its contents, threw it in the grate, and at once consulted a time-table.

It need hardly be said the dispatch was from Hugh, and requested the detective's immediate presence at King's Dene.

"I shan't be able to catch the two o'clock train, for I must see Hyam before I go," said Healy to himself, after he had looked at the time-table; "but there is one an hour later, and I think I can manage that."

He wired a reply to Hugh, and then set off briskly for a small street in Westminster, where Mr. Phineas Hyam's abode was situated, and having reached it, was ushered into a small back room, littered over with papers, that apparently served the Jew as an office.

"Mr. Hyam is engaged just now, but he won't be long if you'll stay," said the boy who let him in, and the detective seated himself on a very rickety chair, and prepared himself to await, with what patience he might, the advent of the money-lender.

Mr. Healy had a peculiarity, well-known to his friends—he could not sit still, and his curiosity was so insatiable that it expended itself on the smallest minutiae, when it had not larger matters to feed upon.

In the present instance his eyes roved restlessly round, and at last fell on a small heap of paper, torn into tiny atoms, lying on the floor at his feet. He shook his head in disapproval.

"A mistake to tear up letters that you don't wish to be seen," he remarked, sententiously; "there are no pieces so small but what they may be joined, if one takes time and trouble over the task. The only sure way is to burn them."

He bent down and picked up the morsels, and, by a singular coincidence, the first two he pieced together formed the words "King's Dene" in a very peculiar handwriting—a man's.

"That's odd," he muttered, "for King's Dene is the very place I am going to this afternoon. I wonder who Mr. Phineas knows down there."

His professional experience had taught him one fundamental truth—namely, that there is no scrap of evidence too small to be passed over. However trivial, however seemingly unimportant a coincidence may be, it may yet find a place in the chain of circumstances, where every link has its appointed place, and where one weak place may spoil the whole.

Healy hardly thought it likely that these atoms of paper could have any connection with the case upon which he would shortly be engaged, nevertheless, with the instinct of caution that never failed him, he swept them into an envelope and put them in his pocket, determining to examine them at his leisure.

He had hardly accomplished this operation before the door opened, and Mr. Hyam came in.

"Ah! good morning, Healy; I hope I see you well," he said, with an unctuous smile. "I expected you this morning."

"Indeed! Well, it is no particular satisfaction to me to come," was the ungracious retort.

"I daresay not. How's business?" "Bad—since it has brought me to your house."

The Jew laughed, as if amused. "Ha—ha! You are funny," he observed. "I suppose you have come for the purpose of settling that little matter of your nephew's?" "Yes; and not only that, but to warn you it's the last time I will settle such 'little matters.' If you lend that boy any more money, you may whistle for its repayment—you won't get it from me."

Hyam shrugged his shoulders, and produced a greasy pocket-book, from which he took some papers.

"The amount, principal and interest, comes to a hundred and fifty pounds," he said.

The detective almost started from his chair.

"What!"

"A hundred and fifty pounds," repeated Hyam, coolly.

"But Alfred told me he had only borrowed fifty pounds from you."

"Well—that amount, at cent. per cent. and expenses, comes to what I tell you."

"I shall not pay it, then," said Healy, firmly. "I am willing to give you fifty pounds, and five per cent. interest, but not a farthing more. A hundred and fifty pounds! When did you think it likely that boy would repay you, seeing that he only gets ninety pounds a year for salary?"

"I knew I should get it," returned Hyam.

"Yes—from me. But you don't know the man you are dealing with, for I'll see you d—d before I'll let you swindle me in this fashion. Don't you think I know it's entirely through you that Alfred has gone wrong? It was you who first put into his head the idea of betting, and introduced him to a lot of scoundrels who make their living out of poor boys like him, and now you've got all you can out of him, you come to me for the rest. Well, you can take out a summons against me, or him, or who you like, and then see if you'll get your cent. per cent. interest!"

Mr. Healy was excited, contrary to his wont. A bright pink flushed his cheek, and there was a vibration in his usually quiet voice that announced severe mental disturbance. And, indeed, this intelligence of Hyam's was calculated to disturb him, for he had no means of raising a hundred and fifty pounds at his command even if he acknowledged the debt.

Hyam watched him as a cat may watch the struggles of a mouse which she knows cannot escape her sharp claws.

"Look here," he said, withdrawing one paper from the rest and holding it up, but taking care not to lose it. "Do you see what this is?"

"It is a cheque for ten pounds, signed by Samuel Morison—my nephew's employer."

"Purporting to be signed by him. Look at the signature well."

Healy did so, and his face changed, all the ruddy colour fading out of it.

"It is a forgery," he said, almost below his breath.

"Yes; it is a forgery; and by your nephew."

Healy did not attempt to deny the charge; indeed, directly he examined the signature, he suspected the truth.

"How did it come into your possession?" he asked, with a gasp.

"I cashed it for Alfred."

"But you knew it was not genuine?"

"Yes, I knew that."

The two men looked at each other, then Hyam said, with a disagreeable smile,—

"You see, it is not simply a case of a summons, but a matter of felony—penal servitude maybe."

"You villain!" cried Healy. "If ever a man deserved penal servitude, you do. The only thing for me will be to get Alfred away from London, and out of your clutches, before you lead him into further mischief. You took that cheque because you knew I would pay it rather than see him led to prison; but it is the last time, as you'll find out."

"Let us come to business; I have no time to spare arguing with you," said the money-lender, with an assumption of impatience. "I suppose you'll give me the hundred and fifty now, as well as the amount of this cheque, and something over."

"I can't at the present moment, for the simple reason that I only possess fifty pounds in the world."

"Well, we must come to some arrangement for a future settlement, then. You can pay me the fifty pounds in cash, and give me bills for the rest, coming due at different dates;

and in return I'll hand you over this cheque, and your nephew's acceptances. I think"—with a grin—"you will confess I am very lenient with you, but it's only because I'm sorry for the distress I know that young Alfred has caused you."

Healy looked at him with a peculiar light in his grey eyes, but he did not say anything; indeed, he saw that he was entirely in the Jew's power, unless he permitted his nephew to be convicted as a felon, so the less said the better.

He agreed to the proposed arrangement, and came away with the cheque and acceptance in his pocket; but once outside the door, he turned and looked back at the house,—

"I owe you a debt, Mr. Phineas Hyam"—and he swore a great oath—"I'll be even with you, yet!"

That same afternoon he was on his way to King's Dene, and during the journey he amused himself by piecing and pasting together the fragments of paper he had picked up in the Jew's office.

CHAPTER XLI.

HUGH CLEVELAND came to W.—Station to meet the detective, with whom he had a more or less intimate acquaintance, which had been commenced by the artist procuring a situation in a friend's office for Healy's nephew—a service that had been repaid with much gratitude on the part of both uncle and nephew.

As they drove from the station towards King's Dene, Hugh gave an outline of the case, and such particulars as he thought necessary, and was listened to with deep attention by his companion, who, however, made no notes—one of his peculiarities was a marvellous memory, that hardly anything ever escaped.

"The inquest," continued Hugh, "was held this afternoon at two o'clock, and the verdict was one of 'wilful murder' against Miss Egerton, who has since accompanied White to W.—, and is now in the county gaol there."

He exercised very great self-command, but in spite of all his efforts, he could not prevent part of the deep emotion under which he spoke, finding its way to his voice. His love and pity for the proud girl, who found herself so terribly humiliated, had made him suffer even more keenly than she did, when she was led away from her home—which she was that day to have quitted as a bride—in order to be incarcerated in a prison. He had accompanied her, speaking words of tenderest sympathy, which, however, fell on deaf ears, for Nathalie's fortitude had, in a measure given way, when she heard that terrible verdict, and a state of apathy followed that almost amounted to despair.

She was only conscious that she, who had held her head so high, she, who had done so much in order to preserve the stainlessness of her name, was now the one through whom it was dishonoured, and that she was placed in a position such as no woman of her race had ever been placed in before.

The horror of it was too much for her, and if death would have come at her call she had surely died during those moments of wretched degradation.

True she had partly anticipated the result of the inquest, but we none of us known how much of hope remains with us until the last vestige is torn away by a certainty of evil, and although she had tried to prepare herself for the worst, she had, as a matter of fact, trusted in some unforeseen evidence being forthcoming which would exculpate her from suspicion.

But this was not the case, and Isabel Farquhar's evidence—given with a virulent bitterness that Hugh Cleveland's presence accentuated—was, of itself, almost sufficient to convict her in the eyes of the twelve men who were trying to find out the truth concerning Gilbert Farquhar's death. Any other verdict than the one given would have been impossible under the circumstances.

"Before you go any further," said Hugh, after he had told his story, "I wish you to be thoroughly convinced on your own part of Miss Egerton's innocence."

"Such a conviction is not necessary, sir," responded the detective, cynically, "whether innocent or guilty I should do my best for any client."

"Yes, but I had rather you started from true premises instead of false ones, and I repeat, she knows no more of this crime than I do myself. Now tell me what you think of the case."

"It is a mysterious one," said Healy, slowly and thoughtfully; "and," he continued, with an air of prospective enjoyment, "it promises to be interesting. I do not conceal from you that the lady's position is a very grave one, and unless fresh evidence turns up in the meantime, it is quite certain that a true bill will be brought in against her at the next Assizes, and that she will have to take her trial on the capital charge. In that case the verdict of the jury will probably be the same as that of the coroner."

Hugh shuddered, and was silent.

"You see the facts are dead against her, and there is hardly a link missing in the chain of evidence," continued Healy. "First of all, it is not denied that she engaged herself to a man she disliked for the sake of preserving her father's estates, which could only be done by a marriage with Mr. Farquhar; then, on the eve of the wedding, he presented her with the mortgage he held over them, so that the motive for the marriage no longer existed, but, all the same, matters had advanced so far, that she felt the impossibility of going back at the last moment, though there is no reason to suppose that she was any the more reconciled to the idea of becoming his wife. She goes out for a walk with him, comes back alone soon after a shot has been fired, meets her father and Miss Farquhar, and is observed by them to be agitated. She will not wait for her lover to join them, but hurries into the house and pretends to laugh at all ideas of harm having befallen him, although she says he promised to meet her at the gate of the plantation. All this looks bad, but when we come to the discovery of the pistol which both Mr. Egerton and Miss Farquhar identify as the one given to his fiancée by the dead man, the case grows darker and darker."

"But there were a pair of pistols exactly alike," interrupted Hugh; "the solicitor employed by Mr. Egerton at the inquest cross-examined Miss Farquhar and ascertained this fact."

"Yes, but I understand that Mr. Farquhar said he had lost the other one before he came to King's Dene."

The artist acknowledged this to be true.

"But," he continued, Miss Egerton declares most emphatically that she saw her own pistol in her room after her return from the wood."

"And you think her word is to be trusted? She is not labouring under a delusion?"

"I am sure of it. She is not the sort of girl to cherish delusions, or make mistakes of that kind, for she has the clearest and strongest head of any woman I ever came across, and I would trust her word implicitly."

"Then, if that is the case, the murderer must have used the second pistol. But how do you account for the sudden disappearance of the one belonging to Miss Egerton?"

"I cannot account for it, neither can she; it is an unfathomable mystery, for it is as though it had been spirited away."

"At all events, granting that Miss Egerton has not made a mistake, it must have been taken between the time she saw it in her drawer and when her maid went up to fetch it down, and so someone in the house must be responsible for having it. Has this same maid any spite against her mistress?"

"The very question I asked Nathalie. But she said 'No, they had been on excellent terms.'"

"Is there any other member of the household who would like to injure Miss Egerton?"

"No," said Hugh; but his manner was so hesitating that the detective looked at him with sharp interrogation.

"I hope you are not keeping anything back from me, Mr. Cleveland?" he observed, gravely. "I cannot work in the dark, remember."

"Well, then, I believe Miss Farquhar hates Miss Egerton, and would not hesitate to injure her if she had the chance."

The detective rubbed his hands.

"We have all the elements of a drama here—two women at rivalry with each other," he muttered, in a pleased tone. "You have given me a clue. I suppose I am to take up my quarters at King's Dene for the present?"

"Certainly. Mr. Egerton is most anxious that you should be on the spot, and I also shall remain in this house for the present."

Directly after his arrival and introduction to Mr. Egerton, the detective requested that gentleman to accompany him to the plantation and point out the exact spot where Farquhar's body had lain—an easy enough task, for the ground still bore traces of its ghastly burden.

He examined the moss, the bridge, every tree and shrub that grew around with the minute care of an Indian on the lookout for a trail, and paid especial attention to the hollow of the tree in which the pistol had been found.

When he declared he had thoroughly mastered the geography of the plantation, and they proceeded to the gate where Isabel and Mr. Egerton had waited the night before, the latter said,—

"You have not done much good by your reconnoitre, that is to say, you have found nothing likely to be of any assistance to you?"

Healy smiled, and drew from his breast pocket an envelope, from which he took a cartridge-case and a tiny piece of black material.

"I have found these," he replied, "and I think them of sufficient importance to fully repay my trouble. You observe the cartridge-case has the maker's name on it, and as I picked it up close by the spot where Mr. Farquhar fell, I have no doubt that it was in the revolver that shot him. However, that can easily be proved, for I will go to W.— and see if it fits."

"And the bit of black stuff—where did you find that?" queried Hugh.

"It was caught in a piece of projecting bark, just outside the orifice of the tree in which the pistol was discovered, and as it is part of a woman's sleeve it tends to show that it must have been a woman who dropped the pistol there. Now, if I can only find the gown from which that piece of stuff was torn it will be a very important item; indeed, I shall consider it of the utmost importance, for it will be a piece of circumstantial evidence that nothing can get over."

"Unless," added Cleveland, "it happened to have been caught in the tree before last night."

"I do not think that was the case, for if you remember, we had a very heavy storm of rain the night before last, and you will observe that this bit of stuff is apparently quite fresh—almost new, in fact. Now, regarding the entrances and exits of this plantation, is there another, at this end, besides this gate?"

"Yes," answered the Squire, "there is a gate some distance to the right there, which gives access to the old part of King's Dene; indeed, it opens nearly opposite the Refectory, and close to the servants' wing."

"And would it take a longer, or shorter time, to get from the site of the murder to that gate, than to this one?"

"It would take less time—some three or four minutes less—because that path cuts across a corner, whereas this one describes a curve."

Healy nodded energetically, as if Mr. Egerton's words confirmed him in some previously formed idea.

"Now," he said, "please give me a list of all the servants in your household, together

with the date of their entrance into your family, and everything you know of their antecedents."

The Squire did so, Healy making notes—contrary to his custom.

"Then you really have only one servant who has not been with you some years, and that is Miss Egerton's maid?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where she came from, and what her name is?"

"Her name is Warren; but I know no more about her than that, for my daughter had everything to do with engaging her."

"Was she called as a witness to-day?"

"Yes; she gave evidence to the effect that she had seen the revolver in her mistress's possession, and she believed it was like the one produced. She asked me if it would be necessary for her to appear as a witness before the magistrates, and, of course, I told her it would."

"I should like to see her," said Healy. "Do you think it can be managed without arousing her suspicions as to my profession?"

"We will try; but, from the little I have noticed, I fancy she is a sharp sort of woman, from whom it would be difficult to conceal anything."

Fortune favoured them, for as they entered the hall Warren was crossing it, and the Squire stopped her.

"I wish to express my approval of the way you spoke this afternoon, Warren," he said. "Of course you could not help the fact that what you said was not in my poor daughter's favour, but you did what you could to help her case."

"I was truly sorry to say as much as I did, sir," returned the woman, her low, even tones as composed as usual, while her eyes rested for an instant on Hugh and the detective; "but I only answered the questions put to me, and I could not help doing that. I suppose it would not do for me to go away, so as not to appear before the magistrates?"

"It would do no good whatever; besides"—the Squire drew himself up—"neither my daughter or myself fear the truth. It is that which is not true that will injure us."

Warren dropped a half curtsy, and went on, while the others passed into the dining-room, and again the whole of the ground was gone over, Mr. Egerton narrating his version of what had taken place.

"But you have heard all this before!" exclaimed Hugh, impatiently, for it seemed to him they were losing time.

"I know I have, sir; but it was Miss Egerton's account, given through you, and I want somebody else's as well. I like to see the case as it presents itself to different people. Now, I have a great desire to search this Warren's boxes. Cannot she be got out of the way for an hour?"

The Squire was rather aghast at the proposal; but Hugh suggested that the maid should be despatched to W— with a change of apparel for Nathalie, and, this being done, he and the detective went to Warren's room, and, by the aid of a bunch of keys Healy carried with him, the small trunk containing her worldly goods was searched, as well as the apartment itself, but with a negative result.

The box only held a scanty stock of clothing—there were not even any letters; and although Healy examined the gowns carefully he could not find one whose fabric corresponded with the material of the piece in his possession. When they returned downstairs he confessed himself disappointed.

"Nevertheless, I have not altogether wasted the time," he declared, "for I have discovered two things about this woman—firstly, that she is very cautious, and destroys all her papers; and, secondly, that she was quite prepared for having her room searched. It bore traces of having been put in order with that view. My next move will be to see Miss Egerton herself."

"To-morrow morning, I suppose?"

"No, this evening. It will not do for me to let the grass grow under my feet, for in a case of this kind everything depends on expedition. Why, even while I am talking to you now, chances of clearing up the mystery may be slipping away from me."

This expedition accorded so well with Cleveland's own views that he immediately ordered the dog-cart, and said he would himself drive the detective to W—.

When they were on their way Healy somewhat surprised him by asking all particulars concerning Lionel and Lady Lynwood, with whose disappearance he had, of course, been acquainted—indeed, his interest in the Lynwood family generally seemed very great, and he was especially anxious to know all there was to be known regarding Otho.

"Do you think Lionel Egerton or his companion could throw any light on the murder?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know; but I think it will be worth my while to try and discover their whereabouts," was the reply.

(To be continued.)

"ALMOST ALWAYS SO."

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"We are going down hill," said Grace, moodily. "It is easy to see that!"

"Oh, Grace, don't talk so!" said Louise, tearfully.

"I couldn't before Alfred," said the elder Miss Fortescue, as she stirred her cup of weak tea, and tried to swallow a little of the saw-dusty baker's bread from the little shop at the corner. "But facts are facts, and there's no use trying to blind ourselves to them."

Louise wrung her hands, which, in spite of dish-washing and floor-scrubbing, still remained white and dimpled at the knuckles, like a baby's.

"Oh, Grace!" said she, "why can't I go out and be a seamstress, or something?"

And Louise, feeling the necessity of action of some sort, could not but recognise herself as being utterly useless in this emergency.

She had advertised for a situation in some school, but no one had answered the advertisement. She had registered her name at a pretentious "employment agency" in the neighbourhood, but as yet no crop of ladies in need of governesses, or children wanting instructresses in French, music, and German had sprung up, and now came the point-blank question.

"The postman!" said Grace, suddenly starting up. "Run, Louise, quick, before he knocks! Alfred must be kept quiet, whatever happens. What is it?—a letter for Alfred?"

"Yes," said Louise.

"Open it, child! See what is in it."

"Open Alfred's letter?" cried Louise, in dismay.

"Yes, of course. Didn't the doctor say that nothing must excite or disturb him? It's about some business, of course, and perhaps it needs instant attention."

Thus urged, Louise hesitatingly tore open the letter.

"It's from a Mr. Townsend," said she—"a gentleman who is writing a book."

"Writing a book!" cried Grace. "And what on earth has that to do with Alfred?"

"It's about French literature in the time of the first Napoleon," went on Louise, "and the man wants a lot of information from some unheard-of books in the public libraries here, and he can't come himself because he has sprained an ankle, and some one has mentioned to him the name of Mr. Alfred as a capable and cultivated literary gentleman, whose services in completing a thing of this nature would be invaluable. And he will be happy to remunerate Mr. Fortescue at the rate of five shillings a page for all compila-

tions concerning the Napoleonic age of literature."

"Five shillings a page!" exclaimed Grace, with gleaming eyes. "And for doing the one thing that Alf likes best in all the world!"

"What are we to do?" asked Louise.

"What can we do?" sighed poor Grace. "Write and tell him that Mr. Fortescue is confined to his bed, and that the doctor thinks he cannot leave it for several weeks, even under the most favourable circumstances. Oh, dear! it seems wicked to let this high tide of fortune go by us unimproved."

"Grace!" said Louise, with a quick breath, "it shall not pass us by. I'll do it myself."

"You!"

"Why not I? Cannot I read French as well as Alf himself? Isn't my handwriting big and bold enough for any man's? I'll go to these big public libraries! I'll do the compiling for this man."

"But, Louise, do you believe yourself capable of it?"

Louise drew herself up with mock dignity. "Do I look like an impostor?" said she. "Just wait and see. Give me a chance to build up my reputation. And don't breathe a word of this to Alf. Five shillings! Our fortune is made."

The next day she took her way to the museum, and calmly announced her business to one of the principals attending, a silver-haired gentleman, who at once became interested in her behalf.

He did his best to help her, but it was a little puzzling just at first. She was not certain that she liked it. Her French was, perhaps, a little rusty, and she had never especially studied up what her correspondent called "the primo-Napoleonic age of literature."

But as she worked on, daylight seemed to irradiate her labours, a new intelligence broke in upon her mind. Her pen scratched rapidly over the paper, a sort of method settled itself among the writings of M. de This and Mme. de That, and Louise began to be quite sure that she liked it.

She sent off her work, and Mr. Townsend wrote back expressing the utmost satisfaction. Mr. Fortescue's MSS., he said, were far beyond his most sanguine anticipations in clearness, comprehensiveness and research. He did not know but that the accident of the sprained ankle was likely to prove a really fortunate occurrence. And, better than all, he enclosed a cheque for a sum that seemed like a gold mine to the girls.

This was in March. When the May violets began to blossom in the carts of the flower-sellers, and "Prim-roses! prim-roses!" cried through the streets, Alfred was considered sufficiently convalescent to be told all these events; and one afternoon, sitting by the window, Louise had just begun to say,—

"There's something we've been saving to tell you, because—"

When Grace opened the door, with something of a puzzled face, and announced,—

"Mr. Townsend."

Enter, a tall, fine-looking gentleman, who held out his hand to the bewildered Alfred with the utmost courtesy.

"Being unexpectedly summoned to this neighbourhood," he said, "I could not deny myself the pleasure of calling to thank you for the very scholarly and thorough manner in which you have carried out my ideas respecting the Napoleonic era of literature; and I wish to bespeak your co-operation in another and perhaps more comprehensive literary undertaking which—"

"My dear sir," cried Alfred, "I haven't the least idea what you are talking about!"

"But I have!" cried Louise, starting up.

"I—I—beg your pardon, Mr. Townsend, but it was I that carried out the Napoleonic ideas! My brother was very ill with brain fever, and we didn't dare to tell him, and I had been expensively educated, and read French readily, so that—"

"You don't tell me," said Mr. Townsend,

"that you wrote all those folios in that bold, running hand? that you sifted out the kernels from that mass of historic evidence?"

"Yes, I did!" confessed poor Louise, colouring to the very roots of her hair. "I was just beginning to tell Alfred about it when you came in."

And then, by way of establishing her character for strong-mindedness, she ran out of the room, and hid herself at the back of the kitchen-door, among the pots and pans.

While in the little front room the two gentlemen were affiliating marvellously, and the pale young scholar was mapping out enough work to last six months at least.

"And what I can't do myself," said he, with a sanguine smile, "I shall get my little sister to do for me. For I begin to think she's several degrees more capable than I am."

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing her again before I go away?" asked Mr. Townsend, wistfully.

"Call her, Grace," said Alfred.

So Louise had to come out from behind the pots and pans again. And this time she became really well acquainted with Mr. Townsend.

Things happen most unaccountably in the world. For example: In a few weeks Mr. Townsend discovered that it would accelerate the progress of his work very much indeed if he could personally superintend it. And he found himself compelled to go over a great many of the folios with Miss Fortescue. And one day they drifted off into a topic of conversation quite irrelevant to literature of any age whatever.

And Alfred, buried soul and spirit in a pile of tomes in the window seat beyond, had to be shaken briskly by the shoulders before he could be brought back into everyday existence.

"Eh?" said he, laying down his pen.

"What is it?"

"My dear fellow, congratulate me!" cried Townsend, radiantly. "Your sister has promised to be my wife!"

Alfred Fortescue was not particularly surprised. Your bookworm never is surprised at anything. But Grace was.

"Well, I declare!" was her characteristic exclamation. "Just when I thought our affairs were most hopeless the dawn of good luck was at hand!"

"Isn't it almost always so?" asked Louise, softly.

That which we are we shall teach, not voluntarily, but involuntarily. Thoughts come into our minds by avenues which we never left open, and thoughts go out of our minds through avenues which we never voluntarily opened. Character teaches over our head.

DRINKING AND APOPLEXY.—It is the essential nature of all wines and spirits to send an increased amount of blood to the brain. The first effect of taking a glass of wine or stronger form of alcohol is to send the blood there faster than common. Hence the circulation that gives the red face. It increases the activity of the brain, and it works faster, and so does the tongue; but as the blood goes faster than common to the brain, it returns faster, and no immediate harm may result. But suppose a man keeps on drinking, the blood is sent to the brain so fast in large quantities that, in order to make room for it, the arteries have to charge themselves. They increase in size, and, in doing so, they press against the more yielding, flaccid veins, which carry the blood out of the brain and thus diminish the size of the pores—the result being that the blood is not only carried to the arteries of the brain faster than is natural or healthful, but it is prevented from leaving it as fast as usual. Hence a double set of causes of death are in operation. Hence a man may drink enough brandy or other spirits in a few hours, or even minutes, to bring on a fatal attack of apoplexy. This is being literally dead drunk.

SAVED BY LOVE.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

"How dare you come here to add insult to injury?" cries Esme, flashing back defiance from out her eyes that have a dangerous, lurid light in them that for an instant quells even the proud unyielding spirit of Lady Croyland.

"Shameless creature to defy me, whom you have wronged and dishonoured! I blush for you," replies her ladyship, in concentrated anger. "I know all; it is no use your denying what I have seen with my own eyes."

"Please explain yourself, Lady Croyland; I insist upon knowing why you presume to use such language to me," Esme demands indignantly.

"Perhaps you will be surprised to hear that I have only just met Lord Macivor at the station."

"What if you did? He is free, I suppose, to travel without your consent?" she retorts, with withering scorn in her eyes.

"I blush for you, rash, audacious woman, to stand and defy the mother of the man whom you have ruined, the prop of my house, the only joy of my old age. The man I met just now is your lover. Don't dare to deny it; he has been visiting you. Would to Heaven it were not so crushingly true! No blot has ever blurred the purity of our escutcheon; the name of Croyland has been handed down from generation to generation spotless, untarnished. Till you, serpent-like, entered our home, our motto has stood out clear and bold—by constancy and virtue. Would that my poor deluded son had never beheld your false face."

Esme stands perfectly erect, statue-like, all vestige of colour flown from her face, which is set and sharply defined, like marble freshly chipped by a grand master's chisel.

But at last the floodgates of speech are let loose at this tirade of abuse, and she says vehemently,—

"You do well to come and accuse your son's wife, the mother of his child, of perfidy, mean, despicable woman, whose every word is a stab, a cruel taunt! Why, your heart is a charnel-house, full of rottenness, where charity and all human kindness is excluded. Go, leave my house this instant; your very presence pollutes its peace and sanctity. I despise you; hold you in contempt."

"I will not leave this house until you give me back my jewels you stole," exclaims her ladyship, in a perfect torrent of rage.

"The diamonds belong to my child by right of inheritance. You shall never wrest them from me; I defy you."

"What if I drag you before a court of law, madam, expose how you entered my house and abstracted them in my absence, like a common burglar?"

"I should compel you to prove your assertion. You seem to forget I am a Croyland; that by all that is right and just the gems belong to me as the wife of the lord of Croylands! I fear yours would be a difficult task to prove to an enlightened British jury that I should have been insane enough to steal my own property," this with a bitter sneer.

"I deny that you have any rights. As a wife you have forfeited the honoured title by your own actions; the frail fetters which at the present moment you seem to hold on to with such tenacity will be severed. Lord Croyland will free himself from this disgraceful bondage; his life shall not be shadowed by a perfidious adventuress."

"Enough, woman!" Esme cries furiously; "if you dare to utter another vile accusation against me I will have you turned out of my doors like a wretched cur. Go, lest I forget you are his mother."

In another moment Esme rang the bell, and said to the servant who answered it immediately,—

"Show this lady to the door instantly."

With stern, compressed lips and an angry

gleam in her eyes, Lady Croyland sailed from the room, muttering,—

"I'll move Heaven and earth, but I will have my diamonds. A curse would follow our house if I permitted them to remain in your alien hands."

"Evil-tongued woman, whose every word was a barbed, poisoned arrow; I feel I could have struck your false face. How she taunted me, glibed me, the mother of his innocent child! Great Heaven! my punishment for the sins of others is almost more than I can bear," moans Esme.

And in a perfect abandon of despair she bows her proud head on the table and bursts into dry, hard sobs that seem to rend her slight frame to its very uttermost.

"Come, cheer up, my lass; don't give way because an old Jezabel comes and says a few dirty words. Your truth and purity will be established yet, and this mad-brained husband of yours will sue you on his knees for pardon, or my name's not Dorman."

"Did you hear what passed, father?" she sobs.

"Every word, and she may be thankful she was a woman for getting out with a whole skin. I dare not enter the room for fear I should forget myself; to hear her cruel words nearly unmanned me, and I felt my hands clench, my teeth grate with passion, so I thought I had better keep out of the way."

"Never mind, dad, you believe in my innocence, that is my comfort; if the whole world deemed me guilty I could bear it now."

"That's my own brave girl," he says tenderly, patting the gloomy head fondly; "we will live for each other till that pig-headed husband of yours comes to his senses."

"That will never take place," she says, brokenly; "he has passed out of my life for ever—the past is a black, hideous dream, the future a blank."

"It can never be that, child, while you have your little one and me to love and cherish you."

"I forgot my darling," she exclaims, starting up suddenly. "Yes, thank Heaven! I have something to live for, to strive and be worthy of! I thank Heaven I am not quite desolate."

Lady Croyland's frame of mind is certainly not of an enviable nature as the train steams along back to Croylands.

"Warren shall release himself from her toils, that I am determined," she mutters; "it drives me frantic to know so base a creature bears our name. I disliked her from the first moment I saw her, decked up like some jackdaw in borrowed plumes. Fudge! my poor boy must have been bewitched, or he never would have been befooled by such a designing minx."

"You saw her, mother?" Lord Croyland says eagerly, when her ladyship returned home, jaded and out of spirits at her frivolous errand.

"Yes, I did, and I heartily wish I had never set eyes on her or you either. She ordered me out of her house as if I had been some low mendicant."

"She dared do that?" he says, almost fiercely, his face livid with temper. "I could have pardoned almost anything but that last crushing evidence of her complete heartlessness and baseness."

"She was nearly at the point of striking me," moans his mother; "her temper was fearful to witness."

"Why did you subject yourself to such an ordeal?" he adds; "you are not fit to cope with such an uncurbed, warped nature as hers."

"I went with one hope, one purpose—to get back the Croyland diamonds. It is too humiliating to know they are held by such a person."

"I would rather lose a bushel of gewgaws than have you subjected to such ignominy. I am the only one who should suffer for my rash folly; on my head rest the shame."

"Place all your affairs at once in the hands of your solicitors; wrench yourself free, and

travel for a year till the scandal dies out—which it soon will; time effaces everything."

"It will never bring peace to my heart, mother; my future will be chaos, an eternity of intense misery."

"Why should it be? Surely you will not wreck your whole happiness because of one faithless woman? There are thousands of others in the world good and true."

"I wouldn't trust another with my fate, not if she were an angel. What love I had I gave to her—the better part of my soul was in her keeping. She has blackened it; debased me so low that I fear my own self. Heaven forgive her, for I never can! What I become will lie at her door. I have lost faith in all human kind."

"May Heaven help you to bear this cruel burden with more patience than you can feel just at this trying moment, while your wounds are fresh."

"But deep, deep as the grave itself," he mutters, as he leaves the room.

"I am thankful I did not tell him I met Lord MacIvor," murmurs her ladyship. "Poor dear boy, my heart bleeds for him; but he and Angus must never meet, or there will be bloodshed. I must avert that, at any cost; advise him to leave England before it's too late."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WARREN rose the next morning, after a fitful, wretched night, feeling unrefreshed, and with a fixed determination to be revenged on MacIvor, whom he now hated with an undying hate.

"Either his life or mine," he mutters, as he goes through his toilet with haste and indifference, all regard for his personal appearance having died out.

"How wan you look, Warren?" his mother says, anxiously, when he seats himself at the breakfast-table; "you need change. Why not run over to Paris and mix in its gaieties? There is nothing like pleasurable society and scene to drive carking care away. Come, dear, take my advice; your little mistake will be a thing of the past."

"Never!" he replies, hoarsely; "mine is not a nature to forget."

"How wild he looks!" she thinks; "there is a vengeful expression in his eyes that alarms me. I pray Heaven he and Lord MacIvor may not meet to-day;" this as she watches him stride down the avenue towards the gate leading to the railway station.

"My lord is gone to Deeside, your lordship," says Brice, when Warren presents himself at the Albany Chambers.

"Confound him; he has betaken himself there to evade me, but I'll hound him down if I follow him to the end of the earth," he mutters, as he turns on his heel.

"What a bloodthirsty scowl he had on his face!" thinks Brice; "I pray the Lord he and the master mayn't meet; there'll be some terrible reckonings if they do. I wish I could warn him somehow."

Warren is soon on his way to the North, tearing there as fast as an express can, bent on an unholy errand—revenge and bloodshed.

"You here, old man! Now, this is really kind of you!" says Lord MacIvor, when his old friend is announced; meeting him with a frank smile and outstretched hand.

"Keep off, MacIvor," he says, savagely, "lest I take summary vengeance. My business with you is to settle our place of meeting. This earth is not large enough to hold both of us."

"Twaddle, boak!" observes MacIvor, "you are simply crazed. I shall believe soon that such is the case if you persist in this foolish conduct. Come, shake hands, and let us be friends again."

"I should be a dastard if I did—a contemptible hound that the whole world would scoff and spurn."

"Surely, Croyland, you never intend carrying out this farce after my solemn

assurance of your wife's purity and innocence?"

"I repeat again, I mean to kill you. Nothing can satisfy me for the foul stain cast by you on my honour."

"I tell you, man, you are wronging one of the purest women on God's earth," exclaims Angus, resentfully; "I only wish I were blessed with such a wife."

"You seem to be partial to other people's wives," sneers Warren.

"Do you forget Lady Croyland is the mother of your child?" urges MacIvor, hotly.

"I don't forget that the lady in question could not have a worse partizan than you, Lord MacIvor."

"Really this is getting too ridiculous," replies Angus, "my patience will soon be exhausted. I know you have cause to feel aggrieved concerning that little boxing affair when I forgot myself and hit out too vigorously, and I ask your pardon sincerely; but as to your wife, I devoutly swear no saint could be purer than she."

"I wouldn't believe you, Lord MacIvor, if you were to swear it at God's very altar, after what the woman said at Edinburgh. Facts are stubborn things. How do you account for passing as the husband of my wife, visiting her daily; and last, but not least, taking her away? Is there a jury in England that would credit your extraordinary statement? Do you take me for a fool or a lunatic?"

"I can only speak the truth. I admit appearances are against me; but I had no idea the lady was your wife, or of casting a stigma on her fair fame than a babe unborn. I wonder you, who have known me from boyhood, can bring your mind to believe me such a scoundrel. Had she been free I would have married her, and devoted my whole life to her and her child. It was to succour, to throw the mantle of my protection over her in the hour of her affliction which has brought about this sad misapprehension. Come, be a man; have some little trust in the word of one who never told you a lie in his life."

"It is enough for me that you have looked in her eyes, breathed love in her ears," he replies, doggedly; "nothing can wipe out the poisonous sting. I refuse to listen to any furtherrodomontade. Name at once where we are to meet, also your second."

"I refuse to meet you, Croyland; it would be an insult to your wife."

"Coward!" cries Warren, livid with passion, and striking him across the face with his glove, "I swear you shall."

"And I say I will not," replies Angus stolidly, folding his hands across his chest, as if to prevent him from resenting the cruel insult.

"You refuse to give me satisfaction?" persists Croyland.

"I do, most decidedly. As for your challenge, well, that is a little set-off against my hard hit the other day. You are a muf, and deserve no end of trouble, if you don't turn over a new leaf and return to your injured, loyal wife, whose fair fame is as spotless as the lily."

"Curse you, I hate you!" hisses Warren, glaring furiously at the calm, firm-set face of his old friend and schoolfellow; "from henceforth you are my bitterest foe, my detested enemy. Wherever we may meet I will hold you up to public scorn and contempt; compel you to meet me face to face—one of us shall bite the dust, rest assured."

"What a stupid ass the fellow is? I really believe he has gone crazed," mutters MacIvor, as his visitor stalks from the room, a fierce scowl on his face, a murderous light in his once soft kind eyes. "I never saw such a change in a fellow in all my life. He is going the pace, I fear. There seems just a symptom of d.t.'s; brandy has something to do with his state. Poor Esme! sweet stainless flower, how I wish I could serve you! At all events, I've kept my promise, and bore his taunts bravely. It was deuced hard, too, when he called me coward. I bit my lip till the blood

came; but, there, what wouldn't I do for her sake? Fate is bitterly cruel to her—to me. Would to Heaven we had met before it was too late, for he doesn't deserve so precious a gift."

A sad, moody feeling possesses him as he thinks over what might have been; but soon he banishes his sorrowful reflections, and summoning his valet, orders his traps to be packed up to be ready to start for the Continent.

"If I stay here I shall get morbid. I'll get away; have a scrimmage among the tigers and wild boars. I can do no good prowling about London or Deeside—only make matters worse. Goodness knows that is not my desire."

That night Lord MacIvor started for a long tour abroad, feeling the best part of his heart remained in the little cottage where a glorious dark-faced woman had bid him good-bye with a voice tremulous with tears, and eyes beaming with gratitude and trustfulness.

CHAPTER XXV.

THREE years have passed since Lord MacIvor left his Scottish home to seek forgetfulness—never once to find it, notwithstanding the hard, adventurous life he led among the wild beasts of the jungle and forests, then to join a party of explorers to the Arctic regions; anything to procure oblivion, to drive from his memory the sweet face of the only woman he had ever loved.

In the meanwhile Lord Croyland roamed about from place to place, never settling down anywhere, an unquiet restlessness, a morbid desire for excitement, for dissipation—anything to drown thought.

Every gambling saloon on the Continent knew him, his chief pleasure now being the music of the dice-box.

In the mad, unholy excitement of the gamster he drove away for the time being the bitter-sweet past memory of a queenly girl who had nestled her head on his shoulder and whispered her love into his delighted ears.

He had refused his mother's earnest supplication to free himself from Esme with a dogged determination that no prayers or persuasion could shake.

"I will not have my name dragged before a gaping crowd of babblers, to have the woman's fair fame trampled in the mire—she who has pillowed her head on my breast. Mine is the wrong; mine the suffering. The world owes me naught, neither do I owe the world. I despise the man or woman who goes crying their own shame on the housetops. Such people are as bad and degraded as their frail partners," was the reply he gave his mother before he set upon his travels, and she was bitterly angered and incensed at his resolve.

"Ruined for ever," she moaned, "eternally disgraced. The one hope of my life to hold my son's heir in my arms crushed—no childish laughter, no little feet pattering about the old home. Nothing but desolation—despair. Dark was the hour when he set eyes on her fatal face; would that she were dead."

From the time Lady Croyland stood beside the faithful Margaret, with hot scalding tears forcing their way down her pale cheeks, to bid her son good-bye on the broad white terrace, a settled gloom and stern melancholy possessed her, from which she refused to be rallied out of.

She led the life of a recluse, refusing to receive any visitors except Lady Maude and her mother, her doctor, and her old friend the vicar.

So the years ran on, bringing fresh wrinkles to her face and silver threads in her hair. Her step, too, is not so firm or stately; anyone can see that anguish has robbed her of that once assured ease and grace which was the chief characteristic of the mistress of Croylands.

"Heaven have mercy on my dear boy," says Margaret, one clear spring morning, when the air was fragrant with flowers, as she watched

her master pace the terrace with a wild, haggard face and eyes that were bleared and bloodshot; "there is something weighing on your mind of a terrible nature. I can see it in every look, every word you utter. My old eyes can read sorrow, remorse, agony. Oh, that I could beg on my knees of him to tell me his sorrow! A mouse once helped a lion; who knows but what the old fable might be acted over again?"

Lord Croyland leans on the balustrade, where the passion-flower is in bud. His eyes wander afar over to the lovely woodlands, the clear gurgling brooks that are gurgling and gleaming in the sun rays, and the value and beauty of his splendid heritage flashes upon him in a way it never had before.

"All this is mine—my birthright, my inheritance!" he says, half aloud. "As far as I can see the forest glades, fertile lands, grand old trees, green fields—all is my property; and yet the earth does not contain a more miserable wretch than I, who by my recklessness is drifting fast into a vortex. Ruin must soon follow unless I pull up; but how I am to commence Heaven only knows, considering how fearfully I am already involved. Oh! Esme, my once innocent love, you little know how you have wrecked my life! Heaven forgive you the wrong I have suffered, the hopeless days, the nights of debauch and misery, the horrible peril to soul and body; my manhood wasted, defiled, spent among gamblers, rouses, thieves. My fortune is being consumed by these miserable harpies—the very broad acres that stretch before me mortgaged over my mother's head. Is there no escape?"

"What ails you this bright morning, dear Warren?" asks his old friend, Margaret, anxiously.

"Nothing; I'm all right, Margary. I wish you wouldn't bother me," he returns somewhat testily; "can't a man stand quiet and contemplate nature without being questioned by a—"

"Silly old woman," she adds, "who has made you angry"—this in such a plaintive tone that Lord Croyland relents in a moment his churlishness, and says, apologetically,—

"Don't mind me, nurse; I am out of sorts, not quite comfortable in my mind, and all that sort of thing. I suppose coming back to the old home has raked up the past; you must not blame me but my misfortunes. Try as hard as I will I cannot erase memory here among the trees, the becks, and old associations. It is too much for me; I must cut it again."

"Leave us to the dull life all alone so soon? Why, you haven't been back a week, dearie? You won't be so unkind; it will break your dear mother's heart if you do."

"I tell you I must, I cannot endure this place; besides (this with a grim smile), who knows?—perhaps a new man may reign over these old acres."

"Heaven forbid," exclaims the old dame, hotly; "if ever that takes place, I pray I may be laid in my grave."

"Dear, faithful old soul," he says, catching her wrinkled hand; "I am a thorough scamp I know, but I can never be grateful enough to you for your loving stanchness to me and mine. Would that I was deserving of it!"

Tears spring into his eyes as he presses her hand tenderly, for he sees the wistful expression on her poor, anxious old face, and knows full well that her heart is sore and bleeding for him.

"Why can't you make up your mind to stay among us now?" she falters meekly; "it would brighten my lady's life and make us all so happy."

"I will tell you why I cannot. I owe it to you for your devotion; first, because I have not completed my task of restoring the Croyland diamonds; secondly, I have not avenged my wrong."

"Why nurse, revenge! Did not our Blessed Lord say, Vengeance is mine, I will repay?"

"It's no use arguing; my resolve is fixed as firm to-day as it was three years ago. Mac-

Ivor and I shall meet face to face to settle my long due account."

A deep drawn sigh escapes her as she totters feebly away—a bowed figure, on which the bright rays of the morning sun glints and dances mockingly.

Despite all entreaties of his mother, who, feeling the weight of advancing years, begs tearfully, humbly, that her boy, her only prop of her declining years, will stay and settle down among his people who ask for nothing better than to pay their fealty to the lord of the soil.

"Your tenants are waiting anxiously to greet you loyally, to welcome you with one accord. Consider their claims! You, a large landed proprietor, roam about regardless of your obligations; how can you reconcile your conduct with that of a Christian gentleman?"

"Mother, I beg you will cease recrimination. I am heartily sick of listening to what is my duty. I refuse to acknowledge the right or authority of any man or woman to map out my way of living. I am master of my own destiny, for weal or woe."

Finding all argument of no avail Lady Croyland bows to the inevitable, and soon the grand old mansion returns to its usual habits of quiet and repose, for the lord of the domain is again off on his travels, like a restless spirit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THREE springs have passed over the head of Esme, bringing many changes—one of dark, dreary sadness, as her black dress betokens—the loss of her noble-hearted father, who had been seized with apoplexy and carried off in the winter, when the outer world was barren and bare.

The shock was great to his child, who had never known anything but loving kindness at his hands.

But her loss has made a great and marked change in her disposition—softened and spiritualised it, as it were, from the dross of selfishness and vain, petty regrets; all that was sordid, rebellious, is gone. In their place reigns the true woman and devoted mother, ready to sink self, to abjure every joy in life, to secure lasting peace to her child whom she adores.

It is a delicious afternoon; the air is soft and balmy, the peach-trees laden with blossom, the white and purple hyacinths are filling the spring air with sweetness; all nature is fair and smiling as she strolls in the garden, her little Esme prattling and picking the flowers, filling her tiny hands and lap with her spoil.

Esme is not much changed. There is the same willowy grace and springy step as of old, but she is grander—nobler, because of the subdued, quiet reserve that pervades her every movement.

Her cheeks have a tinge of the roses, her eyes are clear and bright, the outcome of a pure, well-spent life, from which all earthly dross has fled.

Little Esme is the living image of her father, the same fair Saxon type of beauty. She is like an exquisite opening rose, her eyes large, starry, and wondering.

How her mother idolised her treasure not even she herself could fathom—it was deep, undying.

"Fowers, mamma, for zoo," says the child, holding up a bunch of periwinkle all purple bloom in her dimpled hands.

"Thanks, my darling. You shall keep them for grandpa."

"Danpa dorn up there," this as she points to the sky, wistfully; "ickle Esme do there some day, too."

A pang of fear rushes over her mother at the little one's words, lest her darling might, indeed, be snatched from her loving arms.

"I have lost all," she murmurs, "father, husband, love. Have mercy on me, Father of the weak and orphaned! Let me keep my one earthly treasure."

The child is now busy plucking hyacinths,

her little head glistening like shimmering gold in the summer sun.

"See, mamma, I've dot more fowers, lots!" she exclaims, gleefully, putting up her rosebud of a mouth to be kissed. "I've dood. Perhaps danpa will tome down from out the sky and tise me for these."

"May his loving spirit hover and watch over you, my darling," she says, mentally, as they pass out of the green gate into the lane leading to the quaint old village churchyard, where beneath a drooping willow lay the old sea-captain, a white cross on which ivy is climbing marking the spot.

With tender, reverent hands mother and child lay their floral gifts among the many bright blossoms, while tears fall softly from Esme's eyes.

"Why you kie, mamma?" asks the child. "Danpa told me I was naughty if I kied? Why don't he tome and see us? Tan't he det away from the sky?"

"Grandpa cannot come, darling, but he can see you and love you just as he did when he was here. But you must say your prayers to him."

"Now, mamma?" she asks, artlessly.

"Yes, if you like, my pet. God is always near to listen to a little girl's prayer."

Soon the fair child is kneeling beside the grave, her hands clasped, her eyes looking heavenward, as if to penetrate the mystery of that sunny sky.

"Please, dear God, to make me dood, so that danpa will love me and tome back to Esme," she lisps; "and please tell mamma not to kie toss it do makes me so miserable, and bless a ickle child's prayer. Amen."

"If Warren could only see her it would melt his heart," her mother thinks, sadly. "My sweet cherub, you are my guardian angel—my way to Heaven. You have saved me from losing my soul; but for you I should have been reckless—lost."

"What, dear old Margaret!" she exclaims, when on entering the garden she sees the faithful old friend coming to meet them. Esme presses loving kisses on her lips and hand. "This is good of you. Come indoors, you must be tired," as she takes the dame's arm, and leads her to the porch.

"I'd have to be very tired when a sight of his precious child wouldn't make me feel as lightsome as a kitten. Heaven bless her sweet face; why, she's the very image of my poor unhappy boy!"

"Have you seen him? nurse. Has he been to Croyland?" Esme asked, eagerly, a flush dyeing her glorious face.

"Yes my lady, that is what brought me here. I thought it would give you a bit of comfort to have some news of him; besides, my heart yearned to see my little mistress, my bonny pet."

"Now tell me all!" Esme says, when Margaret is ensconced in the easiest of chairs, and enjoying a fragrant cup of tea and cream.

"How did he look—is he changed?"

"Yes, my lady, he is. I never saw such a change in all my life. My poor old heart is sore with thinking of him; he is a miserable man. Lord pity him is my constant prayer."

"Did he mention my name, or ask about our child?"

"No dearie, he seemed dazed like, and broken down in health and spirits, and as hard and unforgiving as ever. I dared not even speak about you lest I should do more harm than good. The blessed Lord only knows how hard it was to keep silent, but I was afraid to meddle between man and wife lest I should do some mischief. Poor, misguided rash boy; he is not deserving such a wife and child, if he only knew you as I do."

"Is it not possible, Margaret, for poor Warren to forgive me for the sake of our treasure? Can he be so heartless if my innocence was proved beyond question?"

"It isn't for me to say what his conscience ought to do, though I will say this much, that no blessing can ever attend a man who turns away from his own flesh and blood,

ALL AMONG THE HEATHER.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STARTLING QUESTION.

refusing to believe in his wife's honour, despite solemn assurance of her innocence. Drat his obstinacy, it makes me vexed, that it does, to see you living here all alone, deserted by the very one who ought to come on his bended knees and worship you. I know your worth."

"Now you do, Margary; but even you who are the soul of charity believed different at one time. You see I was not without blame in the old days, I was full of pride and headstrong to a fault. I forgot or rather had to learn that Caesar's wife should be above suspicion; the responsibilities of my position as a wife never dawned upon me until it was too late."

"Lord love you, you were only a girl who erred from the head, not the heart. Do people expect wisecracks in a lightsome lass as you were?"

"Yes, dear nurse; the world demands at least prudence, obedience to a husband's wishes. I was heedless, ignorant of the great responsibility I had undertaken as the wife of Warren. I deserve my fate, and bow with submission to its decree. Three lives have been wrecked through my rash folly; I can only atone by resignation."

There are tears in her eyes—tears of contrition of an awakened soul that is fighting its way to light and truth; they plash down on to the dimpled hands of her child, who has climbed up on her lap, her favourite post.

"Has someone been torn with oo, mamma?" she asks, opening wide her starry eyes, that flash for the moment with an angry fire at the shocking indignity; "ickle Esme will never forgive them if they make oo kie."

"Sweet little champion!" her mother says, fondly; "no one made mamma cry, dearest; nurse was telling me a story like I sometimes tell you, that was all. Now run and pick her some flowers."

The little thing ran out into the garden among the glowing blossom, the fairest flower among them, one of nature's grandest conceptions.

A tall, bronzed-looking gentleman stands at the gate gazing at the child with eyes that beam with a tender light. Advancing towards the little figure he says,—

"What's your name, little fairy?"

"Esme Croyland," she replied, frankly.

"I thought it was," he exclaims, joyously catching her up in his strong arms and kissing her rosy mouth again and again. "Take me to your mamma, my darling," he adds, putting her down at her earnest request, for the tiny maiden had a rare notion of her dignity and importance.

"Come in, here's mamma!" she says taking his hand and leading him into the pretty sitting room where Esme and Margaret are seated.

"Lady Croyland," the gentleman says tremulously, "do you not recognise me?"

Esme stares in a dazed fashion as if speech was frozen on her lips.

(To be continued.)

CURE FOR RINGWORM.—There is a very widespread belief in the Highlands that the ringworm can be readily cured by rubbing it over and around once or twice with a gold ring—a woman's marriage ring, if it can be had, being always preferred. Riding home one evening, we observed two little girls and a sturdy, long-legged lad sitting patiently in front of a cottage, the door of which was shut and locked. They had come from one of the inland glens to be operated upon, but the possessor of the ring was away in Glasgow, and only returned home by steamer late that evening. When she did arrive, the young people were duly manipulated and ring-rubbed, and in four-and-twenty hours thereafter we were gravely assured that they were quite healed. Any gold ring is usually employed, but the particular ring referred to in this case is much sought after on such occasions, because, as our informant said, it is of very pure gold, with the least possible alloy, and because it is the property of a widow who was married to one husband more than fifty years.

"You are surprised at the likeness to yourself?" observed Clarence Maltby when he saw Elsie shrink back from the picture on the panel that had so startled her.

"Likeness!" she repeated, involuntarily; but a second or two later, she recovered herself sufficiently to say, "yes, I was startled. I thought for a moment that it was my own reflection; then, as it did not change when I moved, I thought it was some living woman!"

"Oh! I don't know that I should have thought that," replied Maltby. "I don't call it such a wonderfully lifelike portrait, and the original must have been four or five years older when the picture was painted than you are now."

He said this in a careless and rather disparaging tone.

Not that he exactly thought what he said, but he was glad to be able to talk to Elsie on any subject, if she would only listen to him, and he believed that by adopting this tone he should manage to make her do so.

The danger had been that she would turn away, refusing to accept his apology, however humbly he might make it.

She had intended to do this, and to decline to speak to him, or to stay in the same room with him, but the sight of this singular portrait had disturbed her self-possession, and had, for the moment, banished her resentment, and he was quickwitted enough to perceive and to take advantage of her astonishment.

"Who is she?" asked Elsie, nervously.

She was still too bewildered to define her sensations, but the impression that she had in some previous state of existence seen it all before—a feeling that had come upon her as she looked out of her window that morning—had been intensified by what she had subsequently experienced, and this startling portrait—so like herself that she could not take her eyes from it—helped to confirm the belief that was growing upon her that there must be some mysterious connection between herself and Trebarthas.

What it could be was more than she could even surmise, but she felt sure that Mrs. Penfold could enlighten her, if she could but be persuaded to do so; and she began to realise that the great interest which the old lady had taken in her welfare, an interest that had not been fully reciprocated, was due to this mystery.

The wild hope, wild as a madman's dream, sprang up in her heart, that the mystery that enshrouded her infancy might be cleared away, and that it would be proved, past all doubt, that she really belonged to well-born, honourable people.

Had she been brought up with the knowledge of the manner in which Lionel Denison first found her she would, no doubt, in her childhood and early girlhood, have woven some wonderful romances, in which she always appeared as the heroine.

But Edith Grey's vindictive assertion that she was a beggar's child, and the unwilling confirmation of the story which she had wrung from Mrs. Curtis, came too late, and with too many painful attendant circumstances, to allow of any hope that she was not a relative of the dead woman by whose side she was found.

Now she felt overpowered and bewildered at the multitude of thoughts that crowded into her brain, and, pointing to the picture, she repeated her question,—

"Who is she?"

"She was the wife of a dead-and-gone Trebarthas," replied Clarence, indifferently; "and she has been dead I can't tell you how long. But I am not well posted up in the family history; I only know that all the

Trebarthas are dead. If they were not, it would be a bad look out for me!"

"Dead!" repeated Elsie, still looking at the picture. "Do you know if it is very long since she died?"

"No, I don't. I can't say that I ever looked carefully at the picture, and you see it isn't in a good light. If you hadn't been standing close to it as you were it wouldn't have struck you so forcibly; indeed, you would scarcely have noticed it."

This was probably true, and Elsie, who was still agitated, shivered slightly, then turned to the book shelves intending to take the first thing that came to hand, and go back to her own room, where she would try to remain for the rest of the day.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mr. Maltby, in an ordinary matter-of-fact tone.

"I came here for a book," she replied, without turning towards him.

"So I suppose," was his answer; "but what kind of a book do you want?"

"A novel," she said, nervously.

"Those are novels," he said, pointing to a large press, but he did not offer to get one for her.

He felt that he must establish something like confidence in Elsie's mind before he could be sure that she would not shun him, or deliberately ignore his presence when he was standing by.

Elsie took a volume from one of the shelves indicated, and was leaving the library with it in her hand, when Clarence said, quietly, and without coming to her side as he longed to do,—

"Miss Heath, I am very sorry that my foolish conduct caused my mother to treat you so badly. I've been wretched about it ever since. I hope you will forgive me, and will try to forget all about it."

"I will try to forget," she replied, coldly, but without turning her face towards him.

Then she went out of the room, and he made no attempt to follow her.

A great change had come over this young man since he had been ordered to leave his mother's house.

When we last saw him he had turned into the park to talk with Edith Grey, who was anxious to discover what had become of Elsie.

Fortunately for the comfort of our heroine he could not satisfy her upon this point, and Miss Grey vented her disappointment in abuse of the girl whom she hated with all the intensity of which her narrow mind was capable.

It was from this abuse that Clarence gleaned all that Miss Grey knew of Elsie's life, but there was nothing in it to greatly surprise him.

True, if this woman was to be believed, the girl had no relatives or friends to protect her, but Clarence considered that she was pretty well able to take care of herself. His own experience had tended to that conclusion; and then, likewise, it cropped out from Miss Grey's remarks that Elsie's guardian was most anxiously seeking her.

"And you wish to help Mr. Denison to find my mother's fair secretary?" he observed, as he twirled the corners of his moustache.

"Find her!" repeated the woman, passionately. "When he does find her, she won't be worth the finding if I can help it."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. Whatever his feelings might be towards Elsie, his sympathies were certainly not with Miss Grey.

"I thought she was safe enough not to trouble me any more when I saw her in your society?" she said, at length.

And there was so much vile meaning in her face, and in the leer in her eyes, that even Clarence Maltby, bad as he was, felt disgusted, and he asked, sharply,—

"What do you mean by your insinuations? Miss Heath was, and I have no doubt is, quite safe and thoroughly respected; and from what you have told me about yourself I

should think she is very unlikely to trouble you, or to have anything to say to you."

He turned to leave her when he had finished speaking.

The woman was full of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and the little that was good in his nature went out to Elsie, as he listened to her enemy.

"Then you have been caught by her baby face, and you want to marry her, do you?" cried Edith, with a harsh laugh.

He made no answer, for he had turned away; but she said to herself as an afterthought,—

"Well, I needn't care if he does marry her; it will save Lionel from doing so. Perhaps when he finds she is married he may come back to me."

"Marry her!" muttered Clarence Maltby, as he went slowly on his way. "Do I want to marry Miss Heath?" he continued. "Well, no, I don't know that I do; but I like her better than any other girl I ever met, and Aunt Pen has promised me her money if I do marry her. That's a great consideration, for Trebartha won't be worth having without some coin so keep it up."

But though he pondered over the subject he did not then make up his mind to sacrifice himself on the altar of matrimony. Remembering what a very secondary person his father during his lifetime had been in his own house Clarence Maltby regarded marriage with justifiable dread, fearing that it might reduce him to a similar state of vassalage, and in this frame of mind he went down to Trebartha.

Mrs. Penfold received him as cordially as it was in her nature to receive any one, and he took up his quarters at the Castle as though he meant permanently to reside there.

His aunt, as he called her, left him pretty much to his own devices, but she more than once urged him to seek Elsie and ask her to become his wife.

Why she had so set her heart on this match she would not say, but that she had done so was quite clear; and he, having grave doubts of his success, even if he made up his mind to propose, urged every objection he could think of, partly from a spirit of opposition, but principally with a view of retaining his own freedom of action.

In one of these discussions he told Mrs. Penfold what Edith Grey had told him of Elsie's early life; but though his statement was somewhat vague, as he had not paid much attention to detail, the fact that Elsie did not know who her parents were was very clear, though it only confirmed what the old lady had gathered from the girl's own words.

Instead, therefore, of having the expected effect, the statement she has just listened to only made Mrs. Penfold more determined in her purpose, and she said significantly,—

"You had better follow my advice, Clarence, for if you don't you will lose my money, and I am very much mistaken if you won't lose Trebartha as well."

"How can I lose Trebartha!" exclaimed the young man, angrily. "If there were any one else to inherit it you wouldn't have it now; and being yours it must come to me."

Instead of directly answering him Mrs. Penfold repeated in a sing-song tone, such as one of the fishermen's wives might have used,—

"The curse on Trebartha shall always remain, Till the child of the true heir be brought back again."

"How can the child be brought back again when it is dead?" demanded the young man, savagely.

"How do you know that it is dead?" asked the lady, sternly.

"I have been always told so," was his amazed reply.

"The child's body was not found, and Gracie Perran was never seen again in these parts," said Mrs. Penfold, slowly.

"And what do you infer from that?" he demanded, sharply.

"Infer a great many things," was the some-

what evasive answer. "I mean to clear the matter up, but I'm giving you your chance first—take it or not as you like."

"I understand what you imply," he said, angrily; "but suppose you are mistaken, as I have no doubt you are; and suppose, for the sake of argument, that some other claimant turns up, and I am ousted from Trebartha with a wife on my hands, a nice plight I shall be in then, shall I?"

"You would then be better off than you are now," was the calm reply; "my money could not be taken from you!"

The young man bit his lip.

Mrs. Penfold's arguments were unanswerable.

But though he was as much in love with Elsie as he could be with any girl his dread of matrimony was very great.

He thought of his mother, and of the way in which she had ruled her husband, and he remembered also to have noticed the change that had come over more than one young lady of his acquaintance soon after she was married.

"They are angels before they are married, and in nine cases out of ten they are viragos directly afterwards," was the conclusion to which he arrived, and he would not at first make any promise to follow his relative's advice.

But Trebartha, though delightful in the autumn, became very desolate as the year was drawing near a close, and the more Clarence Maltby tried to drive Elsie's image from his mind the more constantly was it present with him.

At length he gave Mrs. Penfold to understand that he was willing to follow her advice in the matter, but he likewise added, with more modesty than was natural to him, that he very much doubted if Elsie would accept him, or would even listen to his suit.

"I dare say she will be hard to win," assented the old lady, "and you have made success much more difficult by your insane conduct towards her. What you have now to do is to remove the bad impression you have made. Let her understand that you esteem her; treat her with deference, but don't overdo it, and get her to be on friendly terms with you before you again talk of love!"

"But to do all this I must meet her," he objected. "And I don't know how I am to do so; she is now living with Miss Birch, you tell me."

"Yes; and the best thing you can do is to go to Tiverton; put up at an hotel, and call upon one or two people near there to whom I will give you introductions. I wouldn't call on Miss Birch, if I were you, but I would try to meet her and the girl."

And he did go; he stayed within a few miles of Monkshill for a whole fortnight, but though he saw Elsie at a distance, she did not see him, and he found it impossible, unless he went up to the house in which she lived and asked for her, to obtain an interview, and he went back to Trebartha to report his failure.

Then it was that Mrs. Penfold resolved to take the matter in hand herself, and she determined to induce Elsie to come on a visit to Cornwall, even if she had to invite Charlie Birch to accompany her.

With this object in view, having far greater faith in the influence of her personal presence than in the most cunningly worded letter, Mrs. Penfold started for Devonshire, taking Perran with her, and she had just arrived at Tiverton-station when Elsie reached it, and found herself too late for the train to London.

How she succeeded in bringing out her horse back to her Cornish castle we have seen.

She treated her very kindly; she intended to make the girl her heiress, and she hoped, and almost believed, that she was the true heiress of Trebartha.

But Mrs. Penfold wished likewise to provide for Clarence Maltby.

In her heart she was fond of the worthless fellow, and she and others had, for many years past, regarded him as the future master

of Trebartha. This, if her surmises were correct and he married Elsie, he might still be, and she was not inclined to allow any trivial objection on the part of the young lady to stand in the way of the fulfilment of her schemes.

Thus matters now stood, and the mounted messenger who had preceded the ladies to the castle, had been the bearer of a letter to Clarence, in which he was warned to keep out of the way on their arrival.

Afterwards it would not matter, Elsie could not easily run away, and if Clarence conducted himself according to the precepts of his kinswoman, the young lady would have no fault to find with him.

These calculations would have been greatly upset if Elsie had not had something very much more important to think about than Clarence Maltby.

That portrait, which might have been a portrait of herself, drove all other matters for the time being from her mind.

What could it all mean?

Who was she? What link was there between herself and a family that had lived here, in wealth and honour, for centuries.

She could not tell; but that there was some link between herself and that beautiful lady whose portrait stood in the library, she did not doubt.

Old as was the family of Trebartha, high as they might hold their heads in the county, or in the kingdom, she felt convinced that she was one of them; one of no importance, it might be, but one of the family all the same, if it could only be proved!

If she could only know that she had a name of which she need not be ashamed, so that her hand should carry no disgrace with it to the man she loved; then she felt that she would be content to ask for nothing more.

Her heart had already told her that Lionel Denison loved her, with a love far stronger than her own.

It was not the love of sympathy for a desolate outcast, or of pity for one too weak and wretched to help herself, but the strong, noble, passionate love which a man feels for a woman whom he would make his wife, whom he would honour before all the world, and cherish with all the tenderness of his loving heart.

Yes, if the mystery that had overhung her birth covered honour, instead of infamy, then Elsie felt that she could no longer hide herself from Lionel, and that what he asked from her she would be in no wise unwilling to grant.

In this blissful train of thought her dislike to Clarence Maltby did not intrude. She had, in point of fact, forgotten his presence in the castle; and when the mistress of Trebartha came to her room, with a view of smoothing matters between the young people, she was not a little startled, by Elsie looking at her steadily, and even sternly, as she asked, "Is it the portrait of my mother that stands in the library, Mrs. Penfold?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

MALTBY'S OFFER.

"Your mother!" repeated Mrs. Penfold, her own dark face changing as she looked at the flushed, agitated countenance of the eager girl; "how should I know who was your mother, or who was your father, if you don't know yourself?"

Elsie made no answer, but she shrank back as though she had received a blow, which pained her too greatly to cause resentment.

She had never been quite sure that she liked the mistress of Trebartha; and now, despite the favours that had been forced upon her, she felt convinced that if Mrs. Penfold were not her positive enemy, she certainly was not her friend.

The curt answer she had received would have silenced her for a time, and she would have asked no more questions about her unknown mother if the elder lady had not inquired sharply,—

"What makes you ask such an absurd question?"

"I was struck by the great likeness between the portrait and myself," replied Elsie, timidly. "I thought for a moment that I was looking in a glass and saw the reflection of my own face; and then I remembered that you faintly when you first saw me, and then Perran likewise was startled, and even now can scarcely take her eyes from me when I am near; and Tamzen at first seemed a little afraid of me, though she apologised by saying I looked as if I had just walked out of a picture-frame. I didn't understand what she meant then; I do now."

"Well, yes; there is a wonderful likeness between you and the late Lady Trebartha," said the mistress of the castle, reluctantly; "but that proves nothing. Accidental likenesses occur all the world over. I am afraid you would not find that count for much in a court of law."

Elsie took no notice of the answer.

Courts of law troubled her but little; the question of property being connected with parentage had not yet presented itself to her mind; but the natural desire for kindred, the craving for a mother's love and a father's care, were all powerful within her.

Since she had come to Trebartha all these feelings had been awakened and were clamorous in her heart, from having so long been kept dormant.

In her school-days it had been taken for granted that she was an orphan, and Edith Grey's small words were the first suggestion to her mind that this might not be the case.

Even then there was no living parent spoken of, though it was implied that disgrace must attach itself to her birth, and it was not until she found herself in Trebartha Castle, and everything about the place seemed familiar, that the idea of parents, who might even now be living, came to fill her heart with a longing desire, which nothing but meeting them could altogether satisfy.

"Is that Lady Trebartha dead?" she asked, tremulously.

"Yes, she died a good many years ago," was the chilling reply.

"And her husband, is he dead also?" was the next, though more timidly uttered question.

"Yes, he died soon after his wife; if they had been living how could Trebartha have belonged to me?" demanded Mrs. Penfold, sternly.

"I knew nothing of the history of the family, or of the property belonging to it," returned Elsie, dejectedly; "but it is a dreadful thing to be alone in the world as I am, and I have had such strange sensations in the short time that I have been here, that my sudden meeting with that portrait in the library seemed to give a clue to the mystery that surrounds my early life. But my question was absurd, no doubt. I am sorry if I vexed you."

She turned to the window as she spoke, and stood looking out at the vast expanse of sea and shore upon which the wintry sun was coldly shining, and she longed to get away from the place which exercised such a strange influence upon her.

Mrs. Penfold, who had come to talk about Clarence Maltby, with a view of inducing Elsie to meet him as an ordinary friend, was rather surprised at the turn the conversation had taken; for, whatever her own thoughts and feelings might be on the subject, she had never counted upon the influence which her surroundings would have upon the sensitive girl.

She thought it best now to let the matter pass, and also to refrain from dragging forward Clarence Maltby's name, so after the lapse of a few seconds she said,—

"You have been for a walk, haven't you?"

The girl replied in the affirmative.

"And you nearly met with an accident, I am told," continued the old lady in a tone that was half angry and half reproachful.

"It was nothing very serious," was the indifferent response; "some of the stones of a wall against which I leaned fell over and tumbled into the sea."

"I hope you won't lean against any more walls of the kind," said the mistress of the house, sternly, "unless you mean to kill yourself."

"No, I am not cowardly enough to take my own life, however lightly I may value it," replied Elsie, gravely; "indeed, I shall follow your advice in future, and take Tamzen with me when I go out again."

"Take someone with you, by all means, but there is the gong for luncheon. Will you come?"

And she led the way from the room, Elsie silently following her.

They went to the same room in which they had breakfasted that morning and dined the night before, and the girl noticed as she entered that the table was now laid for three persons.

At any other time she would have resented the secrecy which had been maintained with regard to Clarence Maltby's presence here, but now her mind was filled with something far more important than the behaviour of this odious young man, and she was willing enough to tolerate him. He was part of the disagreeable element which she had to contend with in Trebartha, and she was already bitterly repenting the weakness and indecision which had resulted in her coming here.

"There is no help for me," she thought sadly; "after she presents I accepted, and the promise I made not to go away without stating my intention to do so, it would be impossible for me to leave the Castle secretly, and there will, I feel convinced, be a great fuss if I say that I don't like the place. Besides, that would not be strictly true, for I love it; but I don't like the people, and I particularly don't like Mr. Maltby."

She said nothing of this, however, but took her seat quietly and with a certain dignity of which she was quite unconscious.

Mrs. Penfold, who felt she had been rather too sharp with her young companion, tried to atone for her words by being more than ordinarily genial, and Clarence Maltby likewise exerted himself to be amusing.

Of course Elsie was too well bred, and was too conscious of her own position, to appear either reserved or moody, and she took her part in the general conversation, though she said very little more than politeness demanded of her.

After luncheon Mrs. Penfold led the way to a small drawing-room, in which it was evident that she expected Elsie to spend the afternoon with her.

The weather had changed since the morning, the sun had ceased to shine, dark clouds sounded across the sky; the sea was of a slaty, inky, angry hue, and the wind whistled and moaned in a way that was peculiarly weird and depressing.

Our heroine was just thinking that she would design a pattern to embroider for one of the dresses that had been bought for her in Exeter, when Mrs. Penfold said,—

"I wish you would play something cheerful, Miss Heath, or sing me one of the songs we brought down with us. I think you will find that piano in pretty good tune."

Elsie at once rose to obey. The instrument was an exceptionally fine one; its tone was rich and mellow, and she soon forgot the things that troubled her in the music that was like balm to her soul.

After awhile she sang, and then she played again, something sweet and soft and low; and when she glanced round she saw that Mrs. Penfold had fallen asleep, and that Clarence Maltby, from a low chair in which he was seated, was intently watching her.

She noticed at the moment that he was better-looking than she had ever previously thought him; but it was not his good looks that made her avert her eyes hastily, and

begin a dreamy melody, that could not awake the sleeper.

The expression of his face startled her.

There was not only passionate admiration—there was more than this in it.

For the first time in his life he seemed to feel that there was something almost divine in a pure and beautiful woman; and while the desire to possess her became overpowering, the doubt of his being able to do so was a positive torment.

Elsie played on slowly and sweetly.

But after that one glance she did not look round again.

She was conscious, however, that Clarence came near to her, was standing by her side, and that he was speaking in a tone so low that she tried not to hear what he said.

The recollection that Mrs. Penfold was in the room, and the conviction that there must be a clear understanding between herself and the young man, made her retain her seat and go on playing, until, with a depressing air, he put his hand lightly on her arm and said,—

"Don't play anymore now; she is sound asleep, and I want to talk with you."

The girl complied at once.

An explanation must come sooner or later; perhaps the sooner the better.

His manner of opening the conversation rather surprised her.

"How do you like Trebartha?" he asked, while he pulled the ears of a little spaniel that belonged to his aunt.

"I like it very much, as far as I have seen it," she replied, with a repressed yawn.

"It's a sleepy place," he next remarked, "but it is very pleasant for a few months in the year. Don't you think so?"

"I should think it very probable that it is exceedingly pleasant," was the answer.

"With a little house in town, and this castle, and plenty of money, one might lead rather a jolly life," he continued, nervously.

"It would probably be your own fault if you did not," she returned, calmly.

"Well, I don't know about that," he went on, with a smile. "It would be my own fault, of course, if I didn't try to do so; but to succeed I should have to persuade you to share it with me. By-the-way, what is your Christian name?" he asked suddenly. "It's confoundingly awkward to always call you Miss Heath."

"I prefer being called Miss Heath," was the answer; made in a tone cold and decisive enough to check the ardour of any lover.

"Come now don't fly off at a tangent," he expostulated. "I wouldn't on any account do or say anything to vex you. I'm awfully fond of you as you must know perfectly well, and if you'd marry me, and take care of me, and not be quite such a termagant as my mother is, I think we should be one of the jolliest couples going. Aunt Pen has taken a fancy to you, too, and it would please her very much to see you my wife. Now you can't be offended with what I have said this time!"

He was so evidently satisfied with himself in having got over his proposal in this fashion that Elsie could scarcely repress a smile; but smiling would ill-reconcile with what she had to say, and she looked as grave as possible when she replied,—

"Of course, I am not offended, Mr. Maltby; you have paid me a great compliment, but the arrangement you suggest is quite impossible."

"Why is it impossible?" he demanded; "there isn't any other fellow in the way, is there?"

"There is an obstacle that neither you nor I can remove," said the girl, slowly and sadly. "I don't know who I am, nor to whom I belong. I have no name; I was found by the side of a dead woman who was described as a tramp. I could bring no honour or credit to you if I accepted your offer."

"If I don't mind that you needn't," he said eagerly; "Aunt Pen will put all that to rights. You'll take my name when we are



[ELFIE SAW THAT CLARENCE MALTRY FROM HIS LOW CHAIR WAS INTENTLY WATCHING HER.]

married, so what does it matter what you are called now."

"I wouldn't go to any man as a wife on such terms," she said resolutely.

"But don't you know anything at all about your name?" he asked curiously.

"I only know that I called myself Elfie, and that I have, I believe, always borne that name," she replied.

"Elfie!" said a voice from the easy chair by the fire, and the young couple turned to see Mrs. Penfold looking at them.

"Yes, I suppose that must have been my name," replied Elfie, calmly.

She had not forgotten, nor had she yet ceased to feel the rebuff this lady had given her about her parentage, and she would not expose herself a second time to the same kind of thing if she could help it.

"It is a singular name," said the mistress of the Castle, rising to her feet and pacing the room restlessly. "How did you come by it?"

"I have no recollection," was the steady answer. "I was told that when I was found by the gentleman who adopted me I said 'Elfie wants' various things; and that I always spoke of myself as 'Elfie,' as I believe some children do call themselves by their Christian name."

"It is singular—very singular!"

And so saying Mrs. Penfold left the room.

Elfie was by no means pleased at this, for she strongly objected to be left alone with Mr. Maltby.

But he gave her no cause for alarm. He had greatly improved in the last three months; he was sincerely anxious to marry her, and he felt pretty sure that his only chance of winning her consent was to treat her with the utmost deference.

So now he pleaded his suit, undeterred by the objection which the girl had deemed all sufficient, and at length he asked,—

"If the mystery you speak of is cleared up,

if you learn all about your parents, and everything is satisfactory—will you then marry me? Will you promise that you will?"

Elfie shook her head.

The more she saw and heard, the more convinced she was that Mrs. Penfold knew more about her parentage than she would at present admit.

"You haven't forgiven me," he said, reproachfully; "and you have set yourself against me. But I'm awfully fond of you, Elfie, and I'll make you a good husband if you'll have me."

"I am very sorry," she said, in a tone of real distress, for his humility and his genuine love appealed strongly to her sympathy; "but I do not love you, and I never shall be able to love you—I know I shan't!"

"Then there is another fellow!" exclaimed Maltby, passionately.

Elfie was silent; and he read confirmation of the truth of his jealous assertion in her face.

"Is it Kingswood?" he asked, after awhile, and with forced calmness.

"No; it is not!" she replied, with such ready frankness that he could not doubt her.

"Do I know the man?" he next demanded, in the same composed tone.

"No, you do not," she said, readily.

"Well, I shan't take your answer as final," he said, rising and going towards the door. "I'll try to win you yet, Elfie. But you needn't be afraid of me; you may lead me anywhere with a silken string."

Then he went to seek his aunt, who was in the library waiting for him.

"Well?" asked the old lady, as he entered.

"She won't have me," he replied.

"Did you suggest that all might be cleared up to her own satisfaction about her birth?"

"Yes, I suggested all kinds of things; but there is another fellow in the way, and she believes herself to be in love with him."

"Who is this other man?" demanded Mrs. Penfold.

"I don't know, she wouldn't tell me; but she refused me because of him," returned Clarence, gloomily.

"You must make her marry you," said the lady, grimly. "If you don't you'll lose Trebartha. Her name—Elfie—settles my last doubt, though there may be some links wanting in the chain, and Perran has become rebellious. She vows that she will have justice done to the last of the Trebarthas, and when she is in this mood I cannot control her."

"Then what would you advise me to do?" asked Maltby, sulkily.

"This."

And then the two human spiders sat down to weave a web in which they designed that Elfie was to be the helpless fly.

The conversation was a long one, but at length it ended.

Their plan was made, and seemed feasible. It could not be carried out at once, however, and they left the library together.

A few seconds after they had gone a panel in the wall near the fireplace slid from its place, and Tamzen, Elfie's maid, stepped out of the recess.

She had hidden herself here, waiting for Maltby, who had several times amused himself by making love to her, and she had overheard the whole of the plot between the aunt and nephew.

Her face, when she came into the light was very pale, for she had been foolish enough to believe the tale of love that the young man out of sheer idleness had told her.

But there was something more than anger, and more than mere disappointment in her eyes. As she had listened to the plot, and heard the details discussed, a bold plan had entered her own mind, and she determined to do her best to outwit them.

(To be continued.)



"I SHOULD LIKE TO STAY HERE ALWAYS," CHARLIE SAID. "I DON'T KNOW WHEN I HAVE BEEN SO HAPPY."

NOVELLETTE.]

JOSIAH GREENSTREET'S SPITE.

CHAPTER I.

Few but those who have experienced it can have any conception of what the hot weather, or Indian summer, is like. The long, weary days, the more awful nights, when rest is well-nigh impossible, combine to form an experience which is the reverse of pleasant; and the unfortunates whose leave is over, or who cannot get away, are more to be pitied than convicts, especially as they have done nothing to deserve the trouble which has befallen them.

It was at the close of one of the hottest days of 186— that a young subaltern was sitting in the verandah of the mess-house of the —th Regiment, his legs stretched on the arms of the so-called "peg" chair, and the peg itself, known in England as a "band S," ready to hand.

The rest of his regiment then present at headquarters were all inside the building, eagerly devouring the contents of the papers just arrived by the English mail. The "peg" was getting flat, and, which was much more serious, rapidly warming, and the hum and laughter went on inside unheeded by the occupant of the verandah, who sat staring blankly at nothing and twisting a letter between the finger and thumb of his right hand, lost in reflection, and oblivious of his surroundings.

Charlie Dacres (for such was his name) had worn Her Majesty's uniform for a matter of five years without any material advantage to himself or damage to the State.

Young and good-looking, a good rider, sportsman and rifle shot, a good hand at cricket, racquets, or tennis—in fact, at anything which his natural indolence would allow him to turn his hand to—he was bound to be a favourite with the men, while his dancing, his dreamy eyes, and

his faculty of saying nothings in the most expressive way imaginable stamped him as a natural ladies' man. He was clever, too, and ought to have got on, but somehow he had missed his mark.

His colonel had nothing to say against him, but he always growled when Charlie asked for leave. His brother officers liked him immensely, but shrugged their shoulders and spoke of him as "poor Charlie," and mamas with marriageable daughters stamped him at once as a young man by no means to be encouraged.

The truth was that Charlie, like many of his class, was head and ears in debt—nothing, when all was said and done, to make ordinary people talk about, but a considerable amount more than he, a penniless subaltern, dependent on his pay, ever seemed likely to be able to pay.

He had, it is true, entered the service with better prospects than he had at the time the story opens, for his father was the head of a country firm of bankers, and was well-to-do, and Charlie his only son. But one fine day there came a crash, and Mr. Dacres was found dead in his study, cut off by his own hand; and the books of the firm, on examination, showed ruin not only for himself, but for many others in the county.

Charlie, who had inherited five hundred pounds from his mother, and whose regiment was under orders for India, took counsel with himself, and came to the conclusion that things were not so bad, after all, and that something would probably turn up.

But five years had sped, and the five hundred pounds had vanished, how he hardly knew; and only that morning he had been puzzling how to meet his liabilities over the last local race meeting. Now he was staring at nothing, thinking over a hundred things, of which the settlement was not one, and for the time being utterly forgetful of his immediate surroundings.

The truth was, the something had turned up.

The letter which he was twisting absently in his right hand had brought him news of fortune, which, even if it was not quite equal to his former prospects, at least meant competence, or, at any rate, comfort for the remainder of his life.

It had come this way. An old clerk of his father's, sufficiently *au fait* to the affairs of the bank, had removed his own savings from the abyss which was to swallow up the little all of so many others; nay, more, he had profited by the catastrophe to invest his money most advantageously in land, and the ruin of many others had been the making of this one fortunate individual.

For years previous to the crash, Josiah Greenstreet had been Mr. Dacres' right-hand man in the bank, and partly by his own shrewdness, partly by the kindness of his employer, he had been able to invest his savings so cleverly that at the time of the crash he was possessed of nearly ten thousand pounds.

How much he personally knew of the state of affairs never transpired, and though some of the more knowing ones shrewdly suspected that his withdrawal of his own savings was not accidental, nothing was ever discovered which could implicate him in any way in the very rash speculations in which the head of the firm had engaged, and the success of his great stroke of business left him a man of such importance in his native town that he was never in any way made to feel that he was an accessory in a very bad business.

He lived after his retirement near the small town where he was born and had worked all his life, always paying his way, and living in a style which, though gorgeous compared to his former penury (for in outward penury his miserly habits had always kept him), was still so quiet as to cause no comment.

It was only after his death that the truth came out.

His ten thousand pounds had been invested in a mortgage on an estate of more than twice that value, and not only had the mortgage never been redeemed, but the debtor had been plunging more heavily into debt ever since his first fatal step, until it was beyond the bounds of possibility that he would ever extricate himself from his difficulties, for as he fell behind with his interest, Josiah, instead of pressing him, had encouraged him to borrow more, until he was so hopelessly involved that nothing short of a miracle could save his estate.

Then Josiah Greenstreet died, and was buried in the vault of the parish church. People said that the old miser had starved himself to death, when they found that he had pinched and screwed to live on so little as possible in order to get his money more securely into his grasp.

Apparently he had lived in hope of being some day Josiah Greenstreet, of Herne Court, a great jump for the town-crier's son (for such he was); but whatever his motives might have been in life, there was no doubt about them in death, for the will which he left behind him was as plain as if it could be.

It seemed as if, baffled in his hope of being a great man in this world, he wished to gratify his spite on the innocent victim of his schemes.

After setting forth that he left all he died possessed of to Charles Dacres, the only son of his late dear friend, &c., &c., he ordered the legatee to foreclose the mortgage at once, and strictly entailed the estate on his heir in such a way that Charlie would only have a life-rent in the property, and could not touch a tree on it without the consent of the trustees.

The will was good enough in law, and there was no hope for the unfortunate Geoffrey Herne of Herne Court, who, on hearing what had happened, died of a broken heart. Herne Court was formally entered by Charlie Dacres' representatives, and, the nine days' talk over, everything resumed its natural course.

The trustees, in whose hands the estate was vested, at once wrote to India to acquaint Charlie Dacres with his good fortune, and at the same time told him that they were carrying out old Josiah Greenstreet's stipulations with regard to foreclosing the mortgage.

It never occurred to the easy-going "sub," who was the heir of the old miser's wealth, that there was anything out of the way in it all, and he accepted it as a matter of course. The only fact that was clear to him was that he was a comparatively wealthy man now that the Herne Court estate was his, and that he could (if he pleased) leave the service and set up as a country gentleman in his own county.

Some such thoughts as these flashed through his brain as he sat in the hot verandah with the bearer of good news crushed in his hand. Visions of debts discharged, leave to England in prospect, and maybe of a fair young girl who had taken his fancy (for she could hardly be said to have won his heart) the previous cold weather, pressed before him, interspersed with a thousand projects forgotten until now in the utter hopelessness of their ever being realised. Now it was all changed, and leave this year and England next seemed but the smallest of the possibilities which Josiah Greenstreet's legacy had put within his reach.

However, it would not do to sit there dreaming all night, as the bugle blowing the first mess-call warned him. A few minutes after Tom Griffith, Charlie's great chum, came out of the bungalow, and linking his arm in his friend's, carried him off towards their mutual abode.

"How glum you are to-night, Charlie!" he said, as they strolled towards the small tumbledown house in which they lived. "Had bad news by the mail?"

"Very much the reverse," was the answer. "One would think your father was dead,"

then recollecting how his friend's father had died—"I mean that your girl had married another fellow, or some equally awful thing."

"Nothing of the sort, I assure you."

"Then what is it?" cried the other, his curiosity getting the better of his patience, "out with it."

"Merely that I have been left a fortune."

"Left a what?" cried the other, stopping in the middle of the road; "you take a fellow's breath away. Are you joking?"

"Never was more serious in my life," said Charlie, "an' did I—, I mean friend of my father's, is just dead, and has left me his property in Warwickshire. I am a landed proprietor."

"Well, I congratulate you, with all my heart," said the other, "though I must say I still suspect still that you are joking. Is this so?"

"I don't wonder at your not being able to believe it," said Dacres. "I can hardly do so myself. But it is none the less true. Read that."

Griffith took the letter, and scanned it. Then he whistled and handed it back to his friend.

"No chance of a hoax?" he said.

"None whatever. The firm who write are perfectly respectable. They were my father's lawyers, and I know their signature as well as I do my own."

"Well, I'm glad for your sake, Charlie," said the other. "It was none too soon."

"Never so soon, indeed!" muttered Dacres, as he entered the bungalow. It had seemed a palace when he left it two hours before, and now it was—a hovel.

CHAPTER II.

A MONTH or more before the events recorded in the last chapter, on a lovely evening in early summer, two people were walking arm-in-arm in the garden of an old-fashioned country manor-house in the South of England. The elder of the two was a man on whose temples the grizzled locks showed that he was no longer young, though the face had a quaint, boyish expression, which to those who did not know him made Geoffrey Herne a puzzle. Always easy-going, careless about important matters, and for ever light-hearted, Geoffrey had aged in appearance far more than in reality, and people accustomed to his ways treated him far more as a young man than as the father of a grown-up daughter.

He had married as a young man, but been left early a widower with an only child, the girl who was walking beside him.

Marion Herne was (so the old folks told her) the most beautiful of a family always noted for the beauty of its women.

As yet she was hardly more than budding into full-grown womanhood, and yet her graceful figure, beautiful face, wonderful auburn hair, and violet eyes, which, young as she was, had made half the youths in the neighbourhood wild with jealousy of each other, marked her as one in a thousand as she stood that evening with her arm linked in her father's in the quaint garden, and the old house as a background, the setting sun just leaving enough light to lovingly illuminate the picture.

You would have said you never wished to see a fairer girl.

Peace and happiness seemed printed on that quiet home, where in a few hours' time desolation was doomed to reign supreme.

The subject which the pair were discussing was one of great importance, viz., a visit to London, which, while it hardly rose to the dignity of a first-season, in Marion's case was to be made to answer for it; and as she was the only child and heiress of Geoffrey Herne, the owner of a good name and fair estate, her father's married sister, Mrs. De Courcy-Smith, had urged upon the Squire the importance of launching his daughter properly in the world of fashion.

Geoffrey at first demurred. He said that he did not wish his daughter to be introduced to a lot of namekalls (he did not like the gilded youth of the present day), who would probably discuss her points as they would those of a horse, and finally, by mutual consent, allow the price to fall to one of their own number. He was prejudiced against town youths, and drew a highly-coloured picture of the modern young man about town, which existed only in his own imagination. He urged, too, that he had lived and married in the country; and, although railways were not so plentiful in his youth as they were now, he still preferred the quiet of his country home to mixing with the outer world.

However, he had been overruled by his more worldly sister, who had arranged that they should pay London a visit of at least a month's duration during the season of that year.

So father and daughter were spending this, one of their last evenings in their country home, in discussing what they would do and see in the great and (to one of them at least) unknown city.

Marion Herne and her father, it must be confessed, viewed the proposed trip in very different lights.

The former, who had never been beyond the narrow limits of her country home, and who had looked upon a visit to the neighbouring county town as the height of dissipation, was wild with anticipated pleasure. To her it seemed only the beginning of her introduction to the business of life.

Her father, on the other hand, wedded to his quiet country life, and anxious only to remain in peace for the remainder of his days, viewed with dislike the idea of mixing again in the busy scenes which he had years before forsaken for ever.

Under these circumstances the conversation between them was bound to be, to a certain extent, constrained and wanting in the sympathy which bound them together on most subjects, and Geoffrey was inclined to be fretful, too, at the idea of all the trouble he would be put to in a few days' time.

"Well, May," he was saying, "I hope that you will enjoy yourself in London. For my own part, I can't see what more you want than what you can get here, and I think your aunt very foolish to put such ideas into your head."

"But, papa," said his daughter, "you can't think how I long to see London. Besides," she added, coaxingly, "if it is only half as bad as you say, think how much more I shall enjoy home after it."

"I hope that you may," was the father's answer. "For my own part, I mistrust these gaddings abroad, and wish people could be content with their own good homes instead of being for ever anxious to see new places."

The bell rang for their dinner here, and put an end to conversation.

During the meal neither reverted to the subject of the London visit, and May in particular carefully led the conversation into subjects which she knew that her father liked to talk about.

Father and daughter parted with more than their usual cordiality that night, and May often afterwards used to remember with thankfulness that he seemed to have quite forgiven her her share in the proposed uprooting from their home.

May was down betimes the next morning, and out in the garden tending her roses, and lovingly straying through the quaint old-fashioned flower-beds, the admiration of antiquaries, and scorn of the modern landscape gardener, which had been her mother's pride, and maybe her grandmother's too. The old rustic postman with his letters passed her on his way from the house, and she had just made up her nosegay for the breakfast-table and was thinking of returning to the house, when she was startled by a loud cry, and turning towards her father's study from whence it came she was horrified to see him standing in the open doorway of the bow-

window which led to the garden, his face terribly pale, and an open letter in his hand. "Marion, my poor May," he cried, in a terrible voice, and before she could reach him he fell heavily forward on the threshold of his own room.

Marion's cries soon alarmed the household, and the old butler, aided by the gardener and coachman, raised the prostrate form and carried it to a sofa, while the female servants, divining instinctively what the distracted girl had failed to realise, hurried her out of the room. An express, mounted on Geoffrey's favourite cob, dashed down to the village, and fortunately, finding the doctor at home, brought him back at once. Too late, alas! to offer any aid, for Geoffrey Herne was beyond human skill; and the old doctor, who had known him from boyhood, just laid his hand upon his heart, and then sadly shaking his head muttered that one dread word which must be spoken of us all one day, and confirmed what was more than a suspicion with the sorrowing old servants who surrounded him.

"Heart disease," said Doctor Graves, in answer to the butler's inquiry. "He might have lived for years, as I told him, and he must have had some terrible shock to kill him thus. Do any of you know whether anything has occurred to-day to distress him?"

The gardener came forward. "This letter was in master's hand when we picked him up, sir," he said.

Dr. Graves was intimate enough with the family to warrant his reading the letter; besides, he argued that he might save the poor daughter some pain, and he took the fatal letter and read it, standing beside the dead man. As he read on his face grew graver and graver; at last he muttered,—

"Can this be true? Poor fellow! it was enough to kill him, and what can become of her?"

The letter he had in his hand conveyed to Geoffrey Herne the intelligence of Josiah Greenstreet's death, and the fatal orders which he had left concerning the mortgage. Small wonder that the unfortunate man, distracted by the thoughts of his loss, and realising too late how completely he was ruined, had, as it were, turned his face to the wall and died, too broken hearted to face the troubles that were before him.

"Perhaps it is best for him," thought the doctor; "but what about the poor girl? If this is true it means utter ruin for her."

Then came the terrible part of the business, viz. to tell poor May that her father was dead. The kind old doctor wisely determined to suppress half his bad tidings, for now that Geoffrey was dead the question of his daughter's future was a serious item in his calculations. It was bad enough to have to break the news of his death. He tried to get May to come to his own home, and when she refused he sent his wife to stay with her, and did his best to spare her all trouble in connection with the funeral.

Poor May seemed to think that the weary days would never end. First came the inquest, when a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was given, and then the funeral, which was attended by half the county, for the dead man had been liberal and respected by all.

Then, as poor Doctor Graves thought, with a sigh, as he drove back to the Court, came the second terrible blow which had been nursing for the poor bereaved girl. He and Mr. Starker, the lawyer, and old Simon Grant, the head of the new county bank, went back together, and talked over Geoffrey's sad imprudence, and his daughter's future as they went. They were all kind men, and as Simon Grant was the principal trustee under Josiah Greenstreet's will, it was thought best that he should be present when the news was communicated to the innocent victim of the old man's spite.

So when they reached the house Dr. Graves sent his wife to bring May Herne to hear her

father's will read, and the girl, with a brave face and sorrowful heart, joined the three gentlemen in the drawing-room, and listened while her father's last wishes were read to her.

The will was dated several years before, and was very brief. It bequeathed everything that the testator died possessed of to his only child, his daughter Marion Herne.

"A model will," said the lawyer, as he finished reading it, "a will admirable in every way. Unfortunately, my dear Miss Marion, your poor father at the time of his death had very little to leave."

"Very little to leave! Do you call Herne Court nothing?" asked May.

"Herne Court had passed beyond your poor father's hands before he died. There is too much reason to fear that it was the knowledge of this that killed him."

"Then have I nothing?" gasped poor May, trying at once to control her emotion, and to realise the facts of the case.

"Very little, I am afraid," said the lawyer. "Two hundred pounds of your mother's, and part of the furniture and stock of the Court for which the trustees who hold the estate have given six hundred pounds. In all you will have an income of forty pounds a year."

"Thank you," said Marion, rising; "I should like to think over all this."

"A moment, Miss Herne," said old Simon Grant; "as the trustee under the will of the late owner (I don't mean your father) of the estate I wish to say that if you desire to make Herne Court your residence for the present we shall keep it up in its present style, pending the instructions of the new owner, who is abroad, and we hope that you will make it your home for—for as long as you like."

The kind manner of the speaker and the implied goodness of the proposal touched May more than the tidings of ruin had done, and she burst into tears, and left the room.

Still on consideration, she resolved she would not accept the kind offer. She did not know who the owner was, but she realised that the proposal came from the trustees, and was given solely on their responsibility. She pictured to herself some country boor or cockney coming to live at the dear old Court, and the thought was too much for her. It was torture to her too, to have to live in the old home, missing the society of the loving father; and in spite of the offers of her friends, and the kind remonstrances of the good doctor and his wife, she determined to leave Herne, and go up to London—not to her aunt's (the very idea of that was too painful, and the associations too fresh to allow her to think of it), but to quiet lodgings in some out-of-the-way neighbourhood, where for a week or two she might look about her, and then decide on what course she should in the future pursue.

CHAPTER III.

It is not surprising that May Herne felt grievously depressed as she entered London. Thoughts of how different things ought to have been would present themselves, and she with difficulty suppressed her tears. As she changed from the train to a cab, to drive to the quiet lodgings which her friend, the doctor, had secured for her, the thermometer of her hopes fell lower and lower, until at last, when after the simple meal which her landlady had prepared for her, she was left alone, she fairly gave way to her grief.

She did not feel particularly cheerful the next morning. The night's rest had to a certain extent refreshed her after the fatigues of her yesterday's journey, but still she felt tired and hopeless of the future. That day she rested, trying to decide what course to pursue. At last she determined to try if she could get employment in teaching, and after a consultation with her landlady, decided to insert a card in the window of the neighbouring stationer's shop, to advertise in the papers,

and adopt the various means of getting employment generally in use.

The next day she carried out her plans, with how small result may be imagined. The world, and London in particular, is overstocked with people in reduced circumstances, anxious to earn their livelihood by teaching. Day after day poor May hoped against hope, and at last had nearly made up her mind to give up and return to Herne, when one day she unexpectedly received an answer to her advertisement, and was engaged as a sort of day-governess to the children of a wealthy city grocer, who had made sufficient money to be able to indulge in the luxury of a villa, not far from the quiet suburb where she was living.

Though she was not able to despise the trifling stipend attached to the post of governess to Mrs. Grice's younger children May felt sometimes that she would rather do anything than face the drudgery which she was now compelled to undergo.

The mistress of the house, to begin with, hated her for being a lady, which she knew she could never herself pretend to be, and left no stone unturned to complete a system of petty annoyances, which would have been amusing to anybody but the victim.

Mr. Grice was a far kinder soul, and beyond "boring" her incessantly and interfering with her teaching on every possible occasion was not a very great trouble.

But worse than either of the above was the eldest son of the house, baptised Samuel in the days when his father was a struggling tradesman in a very small way, and now called Sydney by his adoring mother.

He had inherited all the spitefulness of his mother and all the prosiness of his father, without the latter's good-nature as a redeeming feature. He had, in addition, received the benefits of a commercial education, supplemented by such insight into the manners and customs of the gay world as may be picked up in the pit of a theatre or the back rows of a music-hall, where what he had seen had been only surface deep, and was the very worst of life without the saving point of innate good which in most men forms the silver lining to the cloud.

This young man had early cast the eye of admiration on his mother's governess, and in various ways had endeavoured, while attracting her attention and displaying his own passion, to kindle a reciprocal one in the object of his (very spurious) affections.

The truth was, he was merely indulging his own selfishness and vanity, and his desire to figure in certain doubtful haunts with so handsome a companion as Miss Harris (May's assumed name), who, as he expressed it, "looked quite the lady."

May noticed with amusement some of the youth's antics, which, though meant to be engaging, were simply ridiculous. She had received enough admiration in happier days to be able to guess what all his sighs and leers meant; but seeing him to be a fool, and imagining him to be harmless, she took no notice of him beyond wishing him good-morning when they met.

One day, however, she was destined to be undeceived. It was part of her duties to take her young charges out for a walk every day, and she generally chose a neighbouring public garden, where she could leave them to play about without risk, and enjoy herself with a book in the meantime.

She had dismissed them to play as usual and was seated within sight, and deeply engaged in her book when she became conscious of somebody flopping down beside her, while a voice she recognised said in a jaunty tone,—

"Evening, Miss Arris. You didn't expect to see me, did you?"

May's first impulse was to be angry, but she checked herself, and looking up was more inclined to laugh at the queer-looking swain who was seated beside her.

"No, I certainly did not, Mr. Grice," was her answer.

"I thought you didn't; well, look here. I've

come to ask if you would come to the theatre to-night. I've got two tickets for the dress circle, and I don't mind standing supper afterwards."

In an instant May had sprung to her feet, her face all aflame, and indignation blazing from her eyes. With great difficulty she restrained herself, thinking that he had been drinking, and said,—

"I think you hardly know what you are saying," with which she turned her back upon him, and walked towards the children.

The little snob she was leaving mistook indignation for coquetry, and at once followed her.

"You needn't be so 'aughty," he said. "It's always the way with you gals," and he laid his hand on her arm.

May shook him off with an indignant gesture. Although half-ready to burst into tears her anger still allowed her to speak.

"If you do not leave me this instant, Mr. Grice," she cried, "I shall call for assistance. I never thought you a gentleman, but I thought you sufficiently a man not to insult a defenceless woman."

But this unlooked admission of the estimation in which she held him was all that was required.

"Oh, indeed, Miss Fine-airs!" he sneered; "and since when have you been so mighty fine that my society is not good enough for you? Very well, if you won't come to the theatre you needn't; but, at all events, I must have a kiss for my offer."

As he spoke he advanced towards her. She cast a despairing glance round for aid, but saw no one except the children, who were too occupied with their own games to notice what was going on.

In another instant the bully's arm was round her waist, and she would have had to submit. As his face approached hers so closely that she could feel his breath upon her cheek she recoiled with a cry.

The cry was answered by a half-startled exclamation, and in an instant Mr. Grice, junior, was measuring his length upon the ground, and a friendly voice was saying in her ear,—

"I hope you are not hurt?"

She could not answer. Her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth, and a mist swam before her eyes. She would have fallen if the stranger had not supported her back to the seat.

"Thank you," she stammered. "No, I am not hurt; only that wretch frightened me."

"Shall I give him in charge?" asked the other, pointing to the prostrate Grice, who was sitting up, endeavouring to staunch the blood which was flowing copiously from his nose.

"No; please don't," said May.

"Do you hear, you little brute? The lady says you can go," said the other.

"Lady!" spluttered young Grice. "A fine lady! A governess, on nothing a week, who, when her master's son offers to be civil, gets another chap to come and knock him down."

"The other chap will do it again if you don't take yourself off," said the stranger, coolly, but firmly enough to make the bully vanish. "And now," he continued, turning to May, "if I can be of any service to you —"

"None, I am afraid. I must take these children home, and give my own version of to-day's business—not that it will be much use," said May; and she added, mentally, "I am sure to lose my situation."

"Forgive my curiosity, but that fellow said something about —"

"He was quite right," said May, interrupting him. "I am a governess."

"And to his people?"

"Yes," with a blush. "I am afraid, though, that I shall not remain after to-day—indeed, it would be impossible."

The other said nothing, but his face plainly showed he thought so too.

"I must go," said May. "Many thanks for your kind and timely aid. Good-bye," and she held out her hand.

The other took it, and as he did so thought how beautiful she looked in her deep mourning. He could not resist the temptation to speak.

"Perhaps I may again be able to be of service to you. Here is my card," and, lifting his hat, he walked away.

It did not take May long to discover that, even if she had wished to stay, Mrs. Grice would not have let her.

The sight of her son, with his swollen face, driving up in a hansom cab, with the glass down, was enough; and as young Grice, in addition to being a coward, was a liar, she was primed with the most unfavourable version of the afternoon's adventure.

She attacked poor May most vigorously, called her all sorts of names, and finally ordered her out of the house at once.

May was not slow to go. Nor did she hear of this select family again, except that, two days afterwards, she received a cheque (which she had earned, and could not afford to refuse) for the sum due to her.

It was as well she kept it, as she owed it to the kindness of the nominal head of the family, who had sent it very much against his wife's wishes.

Things were more adverse than ever now, and she was almost obliged to take her preserver at his word, and see if among his friends she might not be able to get a situation. She recollected, however, that such a course was impossible. She had read the card when she got home but soon forgot the name—*Captain Dacres, —th Regiment.*

So time passed on, and she was again reduced to a state of helplessness, when one day scarlet fever broke out among the children of her kind friend the landlady. May, who had nothing to do, willingly undertook to help the mother to nurse them, and so successful did she prove that the young doctor, who attended them, used to laughingly tell her that she ought to be a nurse. He was a very rising young man, and clever, too, this Gilbert Hawke, and he pulled his patients through their sickness successfully. Before, however, they were convalescent something else had happened—he had fallen in love with the pretty lodger who nursed the children so devotedly. He did not know it himself, but still he was badly hit, and used to persuade himself that it was necessary to call at least three times a-day.

Marion was too occupied with her own concerns to notice all this. The doctor's words spoken in jest had taken root in her mind; and she then recollected that she had often heard of ladies who had chosen nursing as a profession, and she determined to ask the doctor about it.

His answers seemed very satisfactory. It occurred to him at once how nice it would be to have this bright creature about the hospital at which he still worked, and he readily gave Marion an introduction to the lady superintendent of the Nurses' Home. To this sympathetic listener Marion told her story, and was at once admitted as a nurse to the home.

The change from the dingy streets to the big, bright hospital on the banks of the Thames was a great pleasure to May, whose health and spirits rapidly revived under this new treatment, and in the course of a few weeks she was almost her former self. Her bright face and loveliness won the hearts of doctors and patients alike; and though, of course, she had still the indelible marks of past sorrows in her heart, still she became, in a great measure, the bright, happy girl she was before death laid his grim hand on Geoffrey Herne.

And as for Gilbert Hawke he was like a moth at a candle—sufficiently a man to keep from the fatal attraction long enough to do his daily round of duty. He was always wanting to consult Sister Marion on some small point or other in connection with a case or to give instructions, while he found it absolutely

necessary to visit her ward at least once during his tour of duty. Others noticed his infatuation; but Marion, innocent of any feeling of the sort on her own part, went on her way fulfilling her daily round of duty, and in the constant occupation forgetting the troubles of the past few months.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE DACRES found life in Junglabad slow enough after his emancipation. The money which had come to him at once cleared his liabilities and left him free to do as he chose—pursue his profession, or retire from the service, and become a loafer at large. India, which before his good fortune had seemed pleasant enough, was now too slow a country by far to please him.

It is curious how altered circumstances change people's ideas. When he had to stay abroad compulsorily he thought India not half a bad country; but once he found that he could leave it as soon as he liked, he suddenly discovered at least fifty reasons for doing so. Still the leave he wanted was not to be obtained at once, and the year was nearly done before he bid farewell to Bombay, with fifteen months' leave in front of him.

Success often makes people discontented, and Charlie Dacres was no better off than his fellows in this respect. Once in England he wanted to be back in India again, and felt inclined to quarrel with the fortune which had enabled him to come home. Then he was gazetted to a company in his own regiment, and was on the point of starting for India again, when he got a chance of employment on active service, and accepted it.

Once abroad, and in constant employment, he became more contented, and found the life of hard work and rough living much more congenial to his taste than that of an idler in London. He threw himself with energy into his work, was noticed by his chiefs, and mentioned in despatches. Promotion was sure to follow, and he seemed on the high road to success, when one day he was prostrated by jungle fever, and could not leave his bed. The doctors pronounced it a very bad case, acting on a frame shaken by rough living and exposure, and when the disease reached its height they said that there was small chance of his recovery.

However, Charlie was not destined to die on this occasion. To the surprise of the faculty he recovered, and slowly found his way back to convalescence, though not to health, till he reached a point where the doctors told him that change of air and good nursing was all that was required to complete his recovery. He was at once put upon a returning ship, and given leave to England.

He was not, however, destined to make such a rapid recovery as was expected. Sitting up on deck one evening off the malarious coast, where he had been serving, he took a chill, and was again prostrated by his old enemy. Once more, as the good ship sped towards England, he hovered between life and death, and it was only when in sight of the Isle of Wight that he was again able to return to the deck. Still far from well, he was ordered to be careful of himself, and recommended to go home, and place himself in the hands of his relations to be nursed for many a long day to come.

The word "home" was useless to Charlie Dacres. He was an only child and an orphan, and he did not know a single relative in the world.

On the advice of a doctor on board, to whom he confided his friendlessness, he determined to take advantage of the comforts of St. Vitas' Private Hospital, where he could enjoy the benefits of good nursing and first-rate medical attendance.

He, therefore, telegraphed from Portsmouth, and receiving a reply that a vacant set of rooms was at his disposal, he armed himself with a statement of his case, and,

attended by his soldier servant, travelled up to London.

The comparatively slight exertion of the railway journey so fatigued him that he went straight to bed, and, for the first time for many a long day, slept in perfect comfort. When he awoke the next morning he was aware of a gentle murmur of voices in the room. The bright morning sun of a lovely June day was shining through the chintz curtains, and at the other end of the room were standing two people, an elderly gentleman, and a woman in a black dress, with white cap, collar, and cuffs, whom he at once judged to be the nurse. The doctor was speaking in a low voice.

"It is a case of good nursing more than anything else, Miss Harris," he was saying. "This gentleman is an officer—returning from the Sirocco coast, who has been suffering from a very malignant low fever. His life has been once despaired of, and only the other day too, but I have no doubt he will pull round all right. Mind, it all depends on the attention he gets."

"I will do my best, doctor," said the nurse.

"I know you will, and that is why I asked you to undertake this case. Mind, you must—" and here his voice sank so low that the patient could not hear what he said.

Indeed, he had been strangely moved by the sound of the nurse's voice. His adventure in the park, though vivid enough at the time, had been completely wiped out by the exciting events which had happened since, and he was puzzling himself to think how he recognised the sweet, low tones which he had just heard.

"Very well," the doctor said, in conclusion, "I know I can depend on you. Poor fellow! how ill he looks."

"He must have suffered terribly," said the nurse; and then, as Charlie opened his eyes, she added, "I am afraid we have awakened you."

"I was only dozing," said Charlie. "It seems so pleasant to find oneself in real comfort again after roughing it so long."

"Well, I am glad you like your surroundings," said the doctor. "Saint Vita's is a very pleasant spot, and if you only pay attention to this lady I have no doubt we shall have you all right in a very short time."

"I will do everything I am told," said Charlie, whose eyes had never been taken off Mary's face. "I'm a capital patient, I believe."

"At all events, you are in capital hands," said the doctor, pointing to May with a smile.

"You are sure to be well looked after here. But now I must leave you. Good morning, Captain Dacres; good morning, Miss Harris."

During the few words which had passed, May, like the other, had been wondering where she had met the patient. On the doctor's mentioning his name a blush spread over her lovely face as she recognised her preserver in the park. Small wonder that she had not remembered him before, for the sickness had changed him so that he as little resembled the handsome young fellow she remembered as the worthy doctor himself did.

As, however, she noticed that he did not seem to recognise her she determined to keep her own counsel, and after asking him if he was ready for breakfast left the room.

Charlie fell into a doze again, and was only awakened by his soldier servant entering the room with a cup of tea and some toast. With his aid he made himself comfortable, and about eleven o'clock his nurse returned.

"What can I do to amuse you?" she asked, standing by the foot of the bed.

Charlie was still ridiculously weak, and everything seemed dreamy to him. He liked watching her where she stood, and (half unconsciously) said,—

"What you are doing now."

She laughed merrily.

"I mean would you like me to read to you?" she asked.

"Do, please," said Charlie. "It would be awfully good of you."

"I don't know what you fancy, but I have brought the *Standard*," said May. "It contains something about the Sirocco War."

"Please read that," said Charlie.

The something was a gazette. Miss Harris, among others, read,—

"Captain Charles Fenton Dacres to be major." What does that mean?" she asked.

"Promotion," said Charlie. "Miss Harris, you are the bearer of good news."

"I hope it may be a good omen for your recovery," said she.

CHAPTER V.

Six weeks passed away (flew, Charlie thought), and by the end of them the patient was far on the road to recovery. He was able to walk about the garden—now sometimes leaning on his servant's arm, sometimes with the aid of a stick.

On these occasions his nurse generally came out for a short time and sat with him.

These frequent *tit-tats* had a great effect upon both of them. When a handsome young fellow is thrown on the hands of a woman in such a condition that she is told that his life depends upon careful nursing, and when a young invalid finds that his nurse, one of a class whom he has been more accustomed to associate with the useful than the romantic, is a young and beautiful girl, they are predisposed towards each other.

The circumstances under which they met daily prevented any feeling of awkwardness in their intercourse; they were simply nurse and patient, and it never entered the heads of either that they were ever likely to become more.

And yet, without knowing it, both were changed during the six weeks.

Charlie Dacres, always a bit of a Bohemian, fond of flirting with anybody for its own sake, accustomed to meet ladies on like terms, and without a dream of seriously compromising himself, found that involuntarily he was altering his notions about the other sex.

When a man is set in the habit of looking upon matrimony as the inevitable fate of all—when, on the contrary, he thinks it a something to which he can never attain—he is too apt to look upon women as playthings, or, perhaps, as harmless creatures whom it is his duty to amuse or devote a portion of his day to.

Charlie, when a penniless "sub," always head over ears in debt, had looked upon his own marriage as the most improbable thing in the world, and judged women only by their looks and powers of flirting.

Somehow his views had changed since he was put under May's care. It was a new thing for him to find a woman, and a young and beautiful one into the bargain, who could see anything in life except the necessity for amusement.

His mother he had never known, sisters he had none, and now for the first time he was beginning to learn the value of a really good woman.

And May, what were her feelings? When first she saw her preserver, as she had learnt to call him, lying weak and helpless on his sick bed, a wild feeling of wishing to repay his kindness to herself had rushed through her mind; and then little by little, as she set to work to carry out her self-appointed task, she had learnt that beneath the handsome, careless dandy, which was the surface view presented by this Major Dacres, there was a capacity for patient endurance and a steadfastness of purpose which might make a man of the apparently empty-headed coxcomb.

So these two had been gradually drawn together till their mutual liking had grown into esteem, and it only needed accident to fan their friendship into a still warmer feeling.

So it came about on a lovely summer afternoon, just as the sun had sunk low enough to make sitting in the open pleasant, these two

were sharing a bench in the beautiful garden of the hospital.

May was occupied with some embroidery, Charlie sitting beside her lazily watching her nimble fingers speeding over the work and talking in a half-hearted way, which showed that the fact of sitting there at all was enjoyment enough for both of them.

The last few weeks had made a great difference in his appearance, and he looked more like the Captain Dacres of the park adventure than the worn soldier who was brought to the hospital.

"What a lovely evening it is!" he was saying. "Makes one wish that the sun would never go down; doesn't it, Miss Harris?"

"Almost too lovely; it makes the ordinary weather unbearable," was the answer.

"Rather different to the climate I was in three months ago. By Jove! I hardly hoped then ever to reach England again."

"You have made a very rapid recovery," said May.

"Thanks to your care," said Charlie. "I should like to stay here always," he added. "I don't know when I have been so happy."

Involuntarily a blush mounted to May's face.

"And yet," she said, "when you leave us a week or so hence, you will forget all about the hospital in a month's time."

"Who talks of leaving?" said Charlie, startled at the thought that this pleasant time could ever end.

"You cannot stay here always," she answered, with a smile.

"And I've been so happy here," said Charlie.

"It's the pleasantest time I ever remember. When one has been knocking about the world without a soul to care for one it is pleasant, after all, to find that there are such kind people in the world."

It struck May that she had never heard him speak of his home. She determined to see if he was quite as friendless as he seemed.

"I have no doubt it is very lonely in India," she began, "but in England—"

"I was far more among friends in India than I am here," he said. "There I had the old regiment; at home I don't know a soul who would have said 'poor fellow' if I had gone under the other day."

"Strange!" said May, hardly thinking the possible construction he might put upon her words; "I, too, am an orphan."

Charlie looked at the black dress, which told its tale, and determined to change the channel into which the conversation was drifting.

"You, at least, have your patients to care for," he said.

"My patients," she answered, with a smile, "are, after all, but a poor substitute for what one has lost. But surely, Major Dacres, you take a very gloomy view of life?"

"Not so," he replied; "I have my profession and my estate. There is a queer story about my being a landed proprietor, which I will tell you some day. Now it would only bore you. However, I don't mean to leave this before I am compelled to. Will they give me a hint to go?"

"Not exactly," said May; "but I heard the superintendent speaking about you. You see, you are nearly well, and the hospital being very popular, they are besieged with applications."

"Well, I don't blame them," he said, with a sigh. "They are quite right, for, after all, a healthy man has no business here."

At this moment the porter came up, followed by a stranger, and May, rising, exclaimed,—

"Oh! I am so glad to see you, Doctor Hawke."

It seemed to Charlie, watching the new comer with jealous eyes, that the doctor was as underbred-looking a man as he had ever seen.

But he was unjust, though, in truth, Gilbert Hawke, in the presence of his divinity, was as awkward and ill at ease as he could well be.

May introduced them to each other, and

then Charlie, greeting him with a very stiff bow, felt himself *de trop*, and excused himself.

"Who is that?" asked Dr. Hawke.

"A patient," was May's answer, but her eyes dropped before his searching glance.

It was a week after this that Charlie was discussing with his nurse the sad necessity for his going.

He was now so far recovered that he felt if he delayed his departure much longer he would be turned out.

"Where can I go?" he was asking. "I hate continental life at the best of times, and I don't know a soul to ask to go with me. I shall miss you awfully."

"Why not go to your own home?" asked May.

"Home!" he cried, bitterly; "the very word is a mockery. I always feel as if it did not belong to me. It came to me quite unexpectedly, to the exclusion of someone who had a far better right than mine, and I always feel as if nothing good could come of it. Even the old people about the place eye me with suspicion, and accept my advances with distrust. I never heard its story rightly, but I am sure I ought not to be there."

"And yet," said May, in spite of her sympathy with these unknown sufferers (for had not she, too, been a sufferer herself), "you have a great work before you to win these people's love and esteem by making them love you in spite of themselves."

"Easier said than done, Miss Harris," said Charlie, gloomily. "I sometimes think I'll let the place and go back to India; and I don't like to do that, for a curious reason. You see, Herne Court ought never to have been mine; it belonged to a girl—a beautiful creature she must have been by all—good heavens! are you ill?"

Marion was sitting, white and pale, by his side.

In an instant the well-loved name had told her all, and she had realised that the man she was talking to—the man whom she had learnt to like, almost to love—was the same who had despoiled her of her inheritance and killed her father.

Controlling herself by a great effort she rose to go.

"I am afraid the heat has made me faint," was all she said, as she swept passed him and entered the house.

In her own room she locked the door, threw herself down on her bed, and wept like a child.

Left to himself, Charlie shook his head and blamed himself for having gone on prosing while she was ill. Then he followed her into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE whole of the next day Charlie missed his nurse, as he had got to call her. He then began to find out how much she had become a part of his existence.

Half another day passed, and still she did not appear, so when the doctor came to pay his daily visit, Charlie determined to put some questions to him.

"Is Miss Harris ill, doctor?" he asked.

"I have not seen her for two whole days."

"Not that I am aware of; but she left us, at all events, for a time!" was the answer. "She heard accidentally that there had been a bad outbreak of smallpox at K—, and that they were short of nurses, so she at once volunteered to go."

"And she is not likely to return?"

"Not for some time, at all events."

"It is just like her to have gone," murmured Charlie to himself; and then he added, aloud, "By-the-bye, I have been hardening my heart, and have come to the conclusion that it is about time that I, too, left this. Thanks to your kind care and skill, I am all right now."

"I am glad you mention it," said the doctor. "I certainly think that if you take care of yourself you have no reason to fear a

relapse now, and can go about again as long as you are sensible. In three months' time you ought to be all right."

Then followed a list of precautions to be taken, and a recommendation to go first to the country, and to avoid late hours and high living; and then Charlie, with many thanks and much regret on both sides, told his man to pack up his kit and prepare for a journey to Herne Court, for thither he had determined to go.

He felt, indeed, that he had neglected the place, and although in his heart he half-hated himself for being the owner of the estate, he determined to do his best to create a good impression in the little world of which he was king.

Coming, as he did, sick from active service, with the halo round him which always surrounds the soldier who has acquitted himself with credit in the field, he found everybody ready to receive him with open arms, and, to a great extent, forgive him for being the owner of the Court.

It was only when from time to time, as he was going his rounds on the estate, that he would find their love for himself was only interested and surface deep, and that he could never hope to possess the real esteem which had once belonged to the Herne family, and he knew that the absent girl, of whom he could gain no intelligence, really owned their hearts. Everywhere he went he was confronted by reminiscences of the dead man and his daughter, and sometimes he would return of an evening and brood over the fate which had made him, however innocently, an interloper.

Prosperity improves some people, and Charlie was beginning to make one of them. He was growing into an intelligent, thoughtful man, the very reverse of the gay "sub." of three years before.

He had another trouble, too, in the impossibility of forgetting his nurse at St. Vita's, a reminiscence which grew rather than decreased under the hand of time. Possibly the recollection of the one woman whom he admired (he did not think of love as yet) had softened him in all his dealings with the sex, and the old servants in the house were astonished to find that they had only to mention that such-and-such had been the custom in Miss May's time to ensure its being continued under the major. The old half-blind retriever which May had given to the village doctor found his way back to the Court, and when Charlie arrived, took up his old place on the hearthrug, and lay there undisturbed, bestowing as much affection as age and failing senses had left him on the new squire.

The trustees had, as has been mentioned before, bought the whole of May Herne's private property, and the same horses stood in the stables, the same furniture in the rooms as before. Charlie, who was a lover of horseflesh, had been struck by the beautiful thoroughbred which had been a birthday gift of Geoffrey Herne's to his daughter, but surprised everybody by ordering him never to be ridden, only exercised by a boy. Why he did so he could not have told himself.

From the worthy doctor and his wife he learnt a great deal about his predecessors, but they knew no more than he did what had become of May. Curiously, too, their only photograph of her had been taken when she was only twelve years old, and bore but faint resemblance to the beautiful girl who had nursed the major. His only real happiness was when he was with these homely people, and he soon learnt to drop in at all sorts of odd hours and spend half his day with them.

There was but one opinion in the county, viz., that poor Herne's successor was a first-rate fellow. As soon as his health allowed he hunted and subscribed liberally; he took part in all their amusements, attended county meetings, was an active member of the bench, and was, in addition, a distinguished soldier and a gentleman.

So six months passed, and Charlie's leave,

which had been extended to enable him to recover from the fatigues, etc., of the Sirocco campaign, was drawing to a close. Not very long before the end of his stay at Herne he had met at a neighbouring squire's Mrs. De Courcy Smith and her two daughters. The good lady bore him no malice; on the contrary, she so far forgave him that she decided her youngest daughter Lucy at the major's head, and wrote to her husband to the effect that "it would be so nice if dear Herne were to come back to the family, after all. I could easily persuade Major Dacres to take the old name, and it would be in every way an excellent match for Lucy."

Pretty Miss Lucy herself learnt to blush when the handsome major spoke to her, and as she was inclined to be sympathetic, and Charlie in his loneliness was yearning for sympathy, the two got on famously. Still, beyond being very good friends, they did nothing to encourage Mrs. De Courcy Smith's hopes; and when that astute lady, having extended her visit as far as she in decency could, was fain to pack up her belongings and escort her daughters home, the best she could do was to extract a promise from the major that he would come and see them in Ennismore-gardens whenever he came to town.

So Charlie's leave came to an end, and he bade farewell to Herne, leaving more regrets behind than he dreamt of, and having decided to return to India and the business of soldiering with his regiment, he travelled to London to equip himself for his journey to the East.

Knowing few people in town, he was not very long before he called at Ennismore-gardens, and was rewarded by finding the family not at home. However, the next day he met them in the park, and was at once invited to take luncheon the next day with a view to his escorting the young ladies to an afternoon concert.

"We shall have nobody but yourself and May Herne, my niece, who is a very eccentric young lady," said the mother. "She has taken to extraordinary ideas since my poor brother died, and actually gains her living by nursing in the high hospitals. I cannot tell you how shocked I was when I first heard of it. Of course she does not go much into society, but as we shall only be a family party, perhaps you will not mind."

"On the contrary," said Charlie, manfully. "I have the highest possible respect for these nursing sisterhoods. I owe my recovery in a large measure to the kindness and attention of one of them, and I shall always regard them with the greatest feelings of admiration."

"Oh, very well. Then we may count upon you," and with a bow and a smile the carriage rolled away.

As Charlie, after leaving the park, was strolling down Pall-mall he ran up against a recently-promoted general officer, one of his chiefs in the Sirocco expedition, a rough old bachelor, but a splendid soldier, who had been one of his best friends.

"By Jove, Dacres!" he cried, "you're the very man I wanted to see. Just step into the club for a minute; I want to talk to you."

Charlie followed him, and Sir Thomas unfolded his news. He had just been appointed to the command of the Kharkipore division in Bengal, and he wanted Charlie to accompany him as his aide-de-camp. He was in the habit of speaking freely whatever he had on his mind, and he did so now.

"You see, Dacres," he said, "you're the very man I want—a sensible fellow, not above hard work at a pinch, and quite as capable of talking twaddle to the old women, and young ones too, I'll be bound"—with a chuckle—"as any of them."

Charlie was not quite proof against this; but, after thanking Sir Thomas he asked for a day to think it over, and then left that distinguished warrior, who cheerfully called after him,—

"Mind, it's yes!"

The next day he presented himself at about twenty minutes past one at Ennismore-gardens. He was at once shown into the drawing-room, the servant saying the ladies had not returned yet. There was only one other occupant of the room, a slim, girlish figure in a black dress, which he recognised at once. Startled by the entry of another person she turned round, and by her startled cry Charlie knew he was face to face with his grandam nurse, Miss Harris.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN May Herne, overcome by the discovery that the man she was nursing was the present owner of her home and her supplanter in her inheritance, fled to her own room, she had given way to a wild burst of sorrow and regret. Mingled feelings of liking for the man and dislike for the deed had torn her usually calm spirit. She was not sufficiently versed in the ups-and-downs of life to realise how often such cases must occur, and she could not help thinking that Charlie himself must be in some way connected with the misfortunes which had led to her own ruin and her father's death. All the courage and fortitude which she had brought to bear to aid her in her own course of life vanished at this sudden link with the regretted past, and a feeling of hatred—as near hatred at least as she could in her goodness reach, of the man whom she thought had wronged her—sprang up on the instant. The doctor had managed her money matters, and she had never even asked in her first bitter sorrow who the new owner of Herne Court was, while her friends, respecting the grief caused by the double blow which had fallen upon her, had only told her that the estate, owing to her father's imprudence, and the grasping villainy of one creditor, had ceased to be hers. There seemed nothing incongruous to her in connecting Charlie Dacres with the idea of a hard-hearted usurer.

She passed a very sleepless night, troubled by the thought that she must meet her enemy (as she called him), or show her displeasure by staying away. The chance of getting to K— on a good excuse seemed a godsend, and she lost no time in availing herself of it.

Time moderated considerably her first ideas about Charlie. Little by little she recollected how nice and gentlemanly he had always been, how good-hearted and chivalrous, and how unlikely it was that he could ever have been mixed up in any disreputable practices; so at last she had come almost to think that she had been hasty in her flight; or, at all events, in her judgment of him unheard. Still there was that awful memory of her father's death, stricken down by the same blow which ruined him and her, and she hoped sincerely that she might never again meet him.

About this time, too, Gilbert Hawke determined to ask her to be his wife, and did so. His proposal came upon her like a thunderbolt, and she tried in vain to recollect ever having given him the slightest encouragement. It was, however, without hesitation that she refused him, and at the same time the thought occurred that he was not at all the sort of man she would have chosen. No! she would have liked some one more like, well, more like Major Dacres, only, of course, that was impossible. Nothing could possibly have been more surprising to both of them than to be thus suddenly brought face to face without warning. May had not expected to meet anybody, and Charlie had as little expected to find the stranger nurse was his own.

The man recovered first.

"How do you do, Miss Harris?" he said; "I did not expect to see you."

"Here I may as well be called by my own name," she answered, rather stiffly. "I am Marion Herne."

Charlie started as if he had been shot.

"You, Marion Herne?" he exclaimed. "What a fool I have been not to have guessed it. I knew I was to meet you here, but I little suspected that my devoted nurse, and the

unfortunate May Herne, were one and the same person."

May had noticed the start. In her eyes it seemed more like conscious guilt than genuine surprise.

"Yes, Major Dacres, I am the unfortunate May Herne, as you so rightly call her," she answered.

"And now I know why you were so troubled when I mentioned Herne Court that day," said Charlie. "Dear old Herne, I should have loved it better than ever if I had known it was your home. Why did you not tell me?" he added, reproachfully. "I am sure when you had seen me, had cared for me, had almost saved my life, you ought to have known me sufficiently to have been able to speak of your trouble without the terrible thought that I was the evil-doer coming between us."

He spoke so humbly, and withal looked so handsome, that May's feelings began to soften. Still she did not like to give in.

"There are sorrows, Major Dacres, which cannot bear handling," was her answer. "Mine was one of them."

"If you had known how often I have heard of you from your old friends, how I have longed to meet you, have tried to find you, to see if I could help you in any way," pleaded the other. "I am sure you would have forgiven me. If you knew how I have tried to carry out your own wishes, spoken when you did not know who I was, how I have endeavoured to make myself felt to be the friend of all about the estate, I am sure you would not throw in my teeth the share I have had in dispossessing you of what ought to be yours."

May was touched, in spite of herself.

"I hope you have succeeded," she said, sadly.

"Succeeded!" he answered, almost scornfully. "How could I? If you only knew the extent to which these old people have schooled themselves to hate me you would not ask about my success. They made me feel at every turn I took that I was an interloper, that I had no business to be there."

"Surely," said May, looking at him for the first time in the face, "there is some way in which you might overcome this?"

As she spoke, Charlie thought she had never looked so handsome; thought, too, of the pleasant hours they had spent together, of the beauty of her nature, and the goodness of her heart. Then, for the first time, it occurred to him that there was a way to repair old Green-street's wrong, though his lips could hardly frame it.

"Can you help me to find one?" he asked.

"No, I cannot," she replied. "But still I think if I were placed as you are I should strive, by kindness and care, by gentle persuasion, and by a sense of benefits conferred, to make them feel that though the past was gone, and could never return, the present was striving in every way to make up for what was lost, until, perhaps, in happier years to come, the old wrong may vanish, and the present ruler become as loved and honoured as that which is gone for ever."

"I know but one way to make my rule popular," he answered.

"What is that?" she asked.

"If you will consent to share it with me. My darling, I have seen you day by day going your rounds, and facing misfortunes. I have felt the benefits of your care, have learnt to love and admire you. I have not known till now what it has been that has killed the pleasure in my late life, but it is a yearning for you. Take pity on me, May; come back to the old Court, help me to learn how to make the people love me as they love you; and let it be as if you, the princess, had taken me to yourself, so that in happiness and esteem the memory of the past may be blotted out."

As he spoke he took her hand. He did not know how near he was winning then by his honest avowal of his love, or how it came upon her like a flash that she, too, loved this man, in spite of the wrong he had done her, and would have been too glad to have shared his fortunes as

his wife. For a while, as he was speaking, she wavered, longing to close the sad chapter of her struggles, and to seek a haven of rest for the future in the heart of the man she knew she loved; but the memory of her father, stricken down so suddenly, came between them and she withdrew her hand to answer,—

"No, no! It can never be; please do not think of it. Believe me it is impossible to abate the evil thus. Your generous offer is made without thinking; you cannot, do not, mean what you say, but speak in pity."

"I love you as yourself and for yourself," cried Charlie, interrupting.

"And I was going to add, it can never be. Ties which cannot be broken, circumstances I can never forget, for ever prevent our being more than friends. Do not press your suit, be kind thus far."

"Ties!" cried Charlie, in agony, "circumstances! I know I am too late." And now that she seemed beyond his reach she became doubly dear. He thought what it could mean; then recollecting Gilbert Hawke and certain stories he had heard at the hospital, he thought he saw the reason for her refusal.

"Heaven bless you," he said, in a husky voice, "I hope you will be happy. If you think of me at all, try to remember me as a friend, and if you or your husband—" but his emotion overpowered him, and seizing her hand he pressed it passionately to his lips, and before May could stop him left the room.

Left to herself May dried her tears, only just in time, as the ladies of the family who had been out shopping returned very late and full of apologies only to find the major gone.

"What can have taken him away?" asked the mother in dismay. "Do you know, May?"

"I think I do. I had nursed him under my assumed name. We saw a good deal of each other, and he has just asked me to be his wife."

"Asked you to be his wife!" cried her aunt in astonishment, "and you?"

"I wonder you ask, aunt," said May, "there was only one thing possible."

"My dear niece, I am so glad."

"You mistake me. I refused him."

CHAPTER VIII.

ONCE outside the house Charlie hailed a passing hansom and ordered the driver to take him to the club. The drive was one of the bitterest reminiscences of his life. Fresh from his defeat, and only just beginning to realise how fondly he was in love, it seemed that happiness was over. First he thought of returning and pleading again, but he knew May's character too well, he thought, to expect her to change her mind. Besides, she had really never cared for him, and, above all, she was another man's promised bride.

Then came the after-thought, where could he hide himself and his sorrow, and he remembered that he had not yet answered Sir Thomas's offer of a billet on his staff. This seemed the very chance he wanted, and his first act on entering the club was to sit down and pen an acceptance of the post. That done he set out for Pall-mall. The first acquaintance he ran against was Sir Thomas himself, who greeted him warmly, and asked if he had made up his mind.

"Yes, thanks. I am going to ask you to take me," answered Charlie.

"Well, that's all right. I was beginning to be afraid that confounded money they say you've come into was going to spoil you like the rest," said Sir Thomas.

"I have not found it a very great boon so far," said Charlie, bitterly.

Then it was arranged, to his great satisfaction, that they were to start that day week, and with a cheery nod the old general trotted off down the street.

Charlie paid his visits to his tailor, &c., and dropped into his club to dine. Then he strolled down to the Strand and occupied a stall at one of the theatres. He found, however, that it was useless trying to drive aw-

care thus. That morning's interview with May was too strong and too fresh for him to be able to forget it, and after an hour or so he got up and left the theatre and walked home to his room.

He tried to turn in, but it was no good; he could not sleep, and so he got up and read. So the night passed away in restless fits of trying to read and sleep, until in the small hours an idea struck him. The very thing, he thought, and turning round he slept till late in the day.

After a hearty breakfast he went out, and calling a cab drove to Lincoln's-inn. Here he remained closeted with his lawyers for a couple of hours, at the end of which he came out accompanied by the junior partner.

"Mind," he said, "everything must be ready in three days' time."

"Depend upon us," was the answer; "though I hope by that time you will have decided not to carry out your present intentions."

"Very little chance of that," said Charlie, with a smile, and wishing the lawyer good-morning he walked away, looking more like the careless Charlie Dacres of three years before than he had for months.

Six days later the continental express carried Sir Thomas and his aide-de-camp to Paris en route for the East.

Charlie's bankers' account was as light as his heart was heavy, when the train rolled slowly out of the station and with increasing speed put an end to the second chapter of his life.

May Herne had seen in the papers that Major Dacres, of the —th, had been appointed aide-de-camp to Major-General Sir Thomas Stubbs, &c. A feeling almost of despair had settled upon her ever since she had refused to listen to the man she loved.

He was going to India and would probably in course of time, amid the other cares of his position, forget the girl whom he had asked to be his wife, for whom there seemed nothing left now but a life of honourable poverty and hard work in the cause of the sick and poor.

The same morning that Charlie left she was sitting in her room at St. Vita's when the porter brought her a card—"Mr. Quile, Lincoln's-inn." She did not know the name—was surprised to find that he addressed her as Miss Herne.

"I thought I had better call upon you personally, Miss Herne," he began, "to deliver this into your hands and to tell you that the firm await your instructions."

"I hardly understand," she said.

"No, I do not suppose that you do; but the letter will explain itself. If you will excuse me, as I have a call to make in the neighbourhood, I will return in a couple of hours and take your instructions. Good morning," and with a bow he placed a large sealed packet on the table and left the room.

May instinctively decided to return to her own room before opening the packet. The nurse came to warn her for duty. May came to the door, looking so white and pale that she thought she must be ill.

"Ask Miss Green to take my place. I am not very well, and if Mr. Quile calls let me know," she said.

She had received a great surprise. On opening the packet a sealed letter and another paper fell out; the last was simply a formal notification from the solicitors that their client, Major Dacres, had requested them to place the enclosed in her hands. The letter ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MISS HERNE,—

"What passed between us at Mrs. Smith's a few days since has made it impossible for me to communicate with you personally, so I must write what I have to say. I leave for India on Wednesday" (this is Wednesday, thought May), "and as we travel with the mails I am not likely to hear from England for some time, so you will be able to reconcile yourself to my proposal. It has been on my conscience ever since I accepted Josiah Green-

street's legacy, that I had all the appearance of countenancing his proceedings. It is not a good thing to speak ill of the dead, but I must confess that old man was a consummate rogue. Without actually overstepping the law he contrived by various means, too long to recapitulate here, to gain such a hold over your father's property that at last he was able to seize it without a word of warning. When I accepted the legacy I knew no more of Josiah Greenstreet than that he had been my father's confidential clerk. Surprised to find him so rich, and knowing he had no relations, I was prepared, nevertheless, to accept his property in the light of an acknowledgment of the benefits which my poor father, in the days of his prosperity, was able to confer on him. It is only lately that I learnt the real facts of the case, or I give you my word of honour that I would never have allowed myself to become the minister of the old man's hate and spite at being defrauded by death of the long-cherished hopes of enjoying the possession of a fine estate. I shall never cease to regret that I have been unconsciously the means of wronging you; and I ask you, with all my heart, to forgive me, and to attribute it rather to my carelessness than to my desire to do wrong.

"I am glad even now that it is in my power to make to you a poor restitution. I cannot give you back the years of misery you must have spent since you left Herne Court, and I must also ask you to forgive me the money I have spent upon myself during the years I have been master of the estate. But I can and do restore Herne Court to you, its rightful owner, and am happy to think that you will find it little altered in the time you have been away. Do not think of refusing; you will only lose, I shall gain nothing. I will never touch a penny of the money, and in the will, which, in addition to the formal deed of gift, I have left with my solicitors, the estate is devised unconditionally to you. If you refuse to use the money, it will only accumulate for your own or your children's use after my death.

"Go back, then, to the home which you love, and the friends who love you, and try by your goodness to make them forget the intrusion of a stranger. Marry the man you love, and live many happy years at home. For myself, I am going to India, where I hope time will help me to forget the folly which made me think that you could love me. Heaven bless and keep you, and make you think kindly of me. Perhaps, in time, if I am spared to return to England, we may meet, when time has brought forgetfulness. For the present, I hope that you will be able to forget my share in Josiah Greenstreet's spite. With many wishes for your happiness, believe me, ever yours sincerely, "CHARLES DACRES."

Bitter tears of mingled grief and shame flowed from May's eyes as she read the letter, grief for the heart she had wounded and the happiness she had spurned, shame to find that the man whom she had looked upon as a rogue was so much nobler than herself.

She would refuse his gift, and would write and tell him so, and beg him to return.

What was this fatal mistake about her being engaged to someone?—Gilbert Hawke, of course. How could she correct the evil?

And then the memory of the scene in her aunt's drawing-room came before her, and she thought how mad she had been to throw away the chance which would, in all probability, never return.

In the midst of such thoughts as these the lawyer was again announced.

May found that it would be useless to refuse the gift, as poor Charlie had said he would not touch it, and, as the lawyer urged with some force, it would be useless to leave so fine a property to go to ruin for want of a head.

He represented Charlie as quite firm, and told her that he and his partner had in vain tried to alter his decision.

"So you see, my dear Miss Herne," he said, in conclusion, "it will be all for the best if you accept the gift. Major Dacres, although a poor man, can perfectly live on his pay in

India, and I am quite sure he will never touch a penny of the Herne Court rents."

"Well, I suppose I must," said May. "But, mind, I look upon the deed of gift as null and void, and I am only going back to Herne as steward of Major Dacres' estate. As soon as ever he returns to England I shall see him, and insist upon his taking his estate back. I have no possible claim upon it. I am sure he will do what I ask him."

"I doubt it," said the lawyer, with a shake of the head.

CHAPTER IX.

So May gave up nursing, and went back to the old home which she thought she had left for ever. The story of Charlie's generous gift eked out, of course, and many and various were the rumours attached to it. To her friends May never denied that she had refused to marry Major Dacres; and even if she had, it would have been useless, for her aunt told it everywhere, taking care to suppress the fact of her disappointment in the matter of Miss Lucy.

If the county thought well of Charlie before, it was even more enamoured of him now, after his last somewhat Quixotic act. But in a very short time he and his story were forgotten, and May found herself treated as if she had never left the Court, and the reign of the Hernes had never been broken.

She was inexpressibly touched to find how little things had altered during her absence—the same old servants, the same horses in the stable, her own favourite just as she had left him, and her father's cob, if anything, in better case. One new inmate had come to the stables, a handsome bay hunter of the major's, as the servants called him. May, who had heard the story of Charlie's refusal to allow anybody to mount her own horse, tried to repay the compliment to "Sultan," who, whoever, so won upon her that she, a capital horsewoman, could not resist the temptation to ride him, and many a canter the pair enjoyed over the neighbouring downs.

Everywhere she went she heard nothing but praise of Charlie, his kindness to all about the estate, and the improvements which he had made in the property. She felt he had greatly underrated his own success, and her one cry in private was, "Would he ever come back?"

Then came another annoyance. She was barely twenty, and the promise of her girlhood had been more than fulfilled. Independently of her supposed wealth, her great beauty won her admirers, and she had half the eligible bachelors in the county at her feet. One or two had the hardihood to propose to her only to meet a firm refusal, and so it was said that she was as cold as she was beautiful.

Very few knew that this was the case, but among them were Doctor and Mrs. Graves. The latter, a kind, motherly woman, who had known May from infancy, surprised her one day before a photograph of Charlie, a present from himself when he had in thoughtful kindness sent to the old couple. Something in the girl's sad face had told the old lady her story, and then May sobbed out her regrets on her bosom, meeting with the sympathy which she required so much.

The old couple laid their heads together after this, anxious to see if they could not find some way of helping these two foolish young people, and the doctor himself wrote to say that he hoped that Charlie had not forgotten Herne Court and so forth; and back came a kind, cheerful letter, describing the writer's life in India, and saying how little he was ever likely to forget Herne and his kind friends. It was clear that May was not forgotten.

But a year passed away and more, and May felt every day more bitterly the folly of having refused happiness when it was offered to her. Her trials, however, were only just beginning.

Gilbert Hawke, having passed through every course and taken every prize, and been looked

upon as the coming man in his profession, had broken down from overwork, and been advised to take a country practice, where the work would not do more than keep his hand in for a year or two.

By chance Dr. Graves had just decided upon retiring, partially at all events, from practice, and had advertised for an assistant. Hawke at once answered, and was accepted, to the utter dismay of May Herne, who only heard of it after all the preliminaries were arranged, and it was too late to draw back.

What made it more awkward was that Gilbert was to live with the old couple. May easily found out what day he was expected to arrive, and managed for some days to avoid him. But this could not last for ever, and one day, as she was riding through the village, she met him face to face.

"How do you do, Dr. Hawke?" said May, holding out her hand.

"How do you do, Miss Harris?" stammered the doctor.

"I am known as Miss Herne here," said May.

"Yes, I forgot, Dr. Graves told me all about you. Still, the old name by which I first knew you seems to suit you best," said Gilbert.

"Please do not recall those times," answered May. "If we are to meet at all it must be as friends."

"I do not wonder at your wishing to forget the days of your troubles," said the other. "But they were the days of my happiness, when we were at least on fairly equal terms—you the nursing sister, I the young doctor. Now—with a sigh—"all that is changed. You have returned to fortune, I have sunk in the world, and am trying in this out-of-the-way place to recover sufficient health to enable me to make a career."

"You take a very desponding view of your prospects," said May, kindly. "In a few months' time you will be restored to health and London."

"I sometimes think," he cried, passionately, "that love of you has crushed the life out of me. Why, oh! why will not you take pity on me?"

"I have told you before, Dr. Hawke," said May, as nearly angry as she ever was, "that we can never be more than friends. If you persist in disregarding this I can only refuse to meet you. Good-morning," and with a touch of her whip her horse sprang forward, and she was gone.

For a few days Gilbert Hawke, when they met, avoided dangerous ground, but then he began again, and as avoiding him meant avoiding her friends, the Graves's, May found herself obliged at times to speak to him. In the course of a month or so his attentions became so marked that it was common talk that the young doctor was going to be master of Herne Court.

Moreover, Mrs. Graves, who had begun to think that so long a time had passed without any news of Major Dacres, that he must be either dead or have forgotten them, aided Gilbert Hawke's suit to the best of her ability, thinking that it was high time that May was married and settled, and that she had waited quite long enough for her supposed faithless lover.

At last things came to a head, when May was openly congratulated by an old pensioner of her own in the village on her approaching marriage. Weary of the persecution and persistency of her admirer she rode straight home and wrote to Charlie,—

"MY DEAR MAJOR DACRES,—

"I could not trust myself at the time to try to thank you for your generous gift of Herne Court, which I have not actually accepted for myself, but have only carried out your wishes by coming to live here and carrying on your work as I hope you would wish. I think now, however, I ought to write and tell you that you ought to come home. There is much to be done which I do not like to settle without your leave, and I really wish (under-

lined) that you would come if only to assist me with your advice. It is so long since we have heard from you that I am beginning to think you have forgotten us all.

"There is another point I want to clear up. I am not, and never have been, and never shall be engaged to Dr. Hawke.

"I have one other thing to say—no, I will not write it. I really want your aid in a very important matter concerning myself, and am going to claim it. You have been more than a brother to me, and I do not know to whom else to turn. Please come.—Yours very sincerely,

"MAY HERNE."

As May signed and sealed this letter, she thought with a weary heart that it must be two, or perhaps three, months before an answer could possibly come.

She began at last almost to despair. Gilbert's attentions became more marked every day, and although she avoided him and even had him refused admittance to the Court, she found that he managed to track her persistently.

At last, one day, when she was sitting in the garden at tea, he came up and suddenly, without warning, poured out such a passionate appeal to her, and, when she refused him, became so violent in his manner, that she feared for his reason. In her distress she was looking round for aid, when a servant came out of the house and delivered a paper on a salver. It was a telegram containing only the words: "Shall be with you soon."

May read them, and for the first time in her life fainted away.

CHAPTER X.

EASTWARD BOUND, hurried along by express trains and fast steamers, Sir Thomas and his aide-de-camp had little time for reflection until they reached Brindisi, and then Charlie found that his spirits were recovering fast from the low point to which they had fallen at home during his last week in England.

Then, when he reached Kharkipore, came the drill season and the inspections, with the continual round of gaiety incidental to the cold weather in a big station.

Charlie fulfilled to the letter the part which the general had set him, and was voted by all a model A.D.C. Then came leave to the hills and an autumn campaign on the frontier, and more honours to be gained, and altogether he felt that he was a happier and a better man than he had been when last abroad. Still, those of his old friends whom he met declared him a changed man, the men saying that prosperity had steadied him, the women that with the rank he had adopted the manners of a major, and seemed to think himself as old as his position in the service warranted his being.

Sir Thomas, who knew or guessed a good deal of his aide-de-camp's history, could not say enough for him, and after the campaign mentioned above, recommended him so strongly that he was again promoted by brevet, and became a lieutenant-colonel. Still, Charlie fretted considerably, and his friend saw with regret that his spirits did not seem to recover the buoyancy which he remembered.

Indeed, he grew so low-spirited and melancholy, that they began to fear that he would worry himself into illness. And so, when a second hot weather came round, Sir Thomas insisted on his going to the hills and trying some shooting as a diversion; and so it happened that while May was writing her appeal to him to come home, Colonel Dacres was away in the hills pretending to be mad after big game, and astonishing his shikari by the little enthusiasm he displayed over a fine head or skin.

Sitting one night beside his camp fire, thinking over some of the events of his past life, and wondering if he should find May much altered and what sort of a fellow her husband was, he was interrupted by the ar-

rival of a coolie-runner with his letters from the nearest post-office, some forty miles off. Selecting three from among the heap of *Times* newspapers, circulars, etc., he laid them aside to open first.

The first was a kind note from Sir Thomas, expressing hopes that his health was mending, and that he was enjoying himself, and giving those little items of news about his friends which always have such interest to the absentee.

The next was directed, in a round business hand, to Major Charles Dacres. Charlie glanced at the signature, and found that it was from Mr. Grant, the principal trustee of Josiah Greenstreet's trust, whose acquaintance he had made at Herne two years before. He read as follows:—

"MY DEAR MAJOR DACRES,—You will excuse my troubling you in the matter of the Greenstreet Trust in which you are interested, but I think it advisable to tell you a legal opinion I have just got from Starker. When you made over the Herne Court estate by deed to Miss Herne I was on the point of writing to tell you that you had no power to do so, but as the young lady at the time refused the gift, and as your lawyers, Messrs. Parchment and Quill, considered themselves acting within your instructions in allowing Miss Herne to reside at the Court, I did not see any necessity for my interfering. Now, however, circumstances has made it imperative for me to explain to you how you stand.

"Miss Herne is, I am credibly informed, about to contract a matrimonial alliance"—Charlie winced—"and as it would never do for this marriage to take place under the impression that you have made over the estate to her, I think it best that you should yourself have the option of writing to tell her that the deed was executed in error. The fact is you have only a life interest in the Court estate, the property being strictly entailed on your son if you have one, and failing issue it becomes the property of our town, to be held in trust for the purpose of erecting and endowing a school. From what I can gather, Gilbert Hawke is an adventurer, who is either misleading or forcing Miss Herne into a marriage, and his present object would seem to be to compromise her, and thereby gain possession of the estate. A word from you would stop this. Of course you have a perfect right to do as you like with the income, and your power only ceases at your death.—Believe me, etc.,

"SIMON GRANT."

Charlie whistled. Then he opened the other letter. As the postmark "Herne" caught his eye, he tore it open and read with feverish haste the letter which May had penned in her trouble. From the hint old Simon Grant let fall he guessed that May was in serious trouble, and wild with delight to find that not only was she free, but that she came to him naturally in her troubles, he at once gave orders to have his kit packed up and a march to be made early in the morning.

A few days later he reached Kharkipore, where he obtained leave, and resigning his staff appointment, hurried to Bombay. Thence he telegraphed to May.

May's fainting fit soon passed off, but before she came to Gilbert Hawke disappeared. He tried several times to gain admittance, but was refused, as May kept her room, until at last a day came when as she was sitting watching the Park from the window, a hired dog cart drove up to the door, and she could recognise the tall military figure which was seated by the driver. A few minutes later they were alone.

"You have sent for me," said Charlie, "or I should not be here."

"I have sent for you because I wanted you to do something for me," was May's reply.

"What is it?" he asked in a constrained voice.

"To forgive me," she replied with a blush, holding out her hands.

Before he could answer she was locked in his arms, and before he released her he made

her promise to destroy for ever the venom of Josiah Greenstreet's Spite.

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

ALWAYS too bad—a pair of knaves.

A DEAD beat—the bursted drum.

THE invention of a lunatic would be reliable, as it would be a non est inventor's work.

THE chiropodist's triumphant march: he goes on cornouncing and to cornounce.

THE ancient earned his living, but he also urred his dead.

IT's scold day when the married man stays at home and turns the parlour into a workshop.

"WHY did you name your dog Back?" "Because he was always running away from home, and we couldn't help calling him Back."

"DIE Wacht Am Rhein" is the German National Hymn; Bismark is the National Herr.

WHEN a man is half seas over you may harbour a suspicion that his judgment is adfoat.

THE VERY LATEST ABOUT WOMAN.—Some malignant slanderer now states that "a woman needs no eulogist, for she speaks for herself."

THE young lady who was accused of breaking a young man's heart has been bound in the bonds of matrimony to keep the piece.

"THAT's a very soft corn of yours," said the chiropodist. "Yes; but it's hard enough to bear," responded the patient.

A YOUNG lady calls her beau "Honeysuckle," because he is always hanging over the front railings.

A literary paper has added a puzzle department to its columns, and the paper is now made up of prose and cons.

THE experienced traveller will admit that 7.40 P.M. is like the stop at a railway dining station—20 minutes to ate.

THE range of vision from the top of the Monument is very great. It ought to be. A man's high site would be good there if anywhere.

A BANKER who is in company with his son receives ten thousand francs from a debtor, and sets to counting the notes. One, two, three, four," he says, and goes on counting up to nine, when he stops, rolls up his notes and whispers to his son, "Never turn up the last note when you are counting money; there may be another underneath it."

A WEALTHY gentleman, who owns a country seat, on one occasion nearly lost his wife, who fell into a river which flows through his estate. He announced the narrow escape to his friends, expecting their congratulations. One of them—an old bachelor—wrote as follows: "I always told you the river was too shallow!"

"BRIDGET, if Mr. Wilkins comes, admit him. Mr. Johnson may come. It's not his night, but he has been affectionate lately, and he's just in the state of mind to make a mistake." Mr. Johnson rings the bell. Bridget: "Missis is very sorry, sir, but she says as how it ain't your night."

A SCHOOLMISTRESS, while taking down the names and ages of her pupils and of their parents, at the beginning of the term, inquired of one little fellow, "What's your father's name?" "Oh, you needn't take down his name; he's too old to go to school to a woman!" was the innocent reply.

FIRST BRIDESMAID: "You'll never tell?" Second Bridesmaid: "Of course not. I never do, you know." First Bridesmaid: "Well, she told me, in strict confidence, understand, that, though Jack was poor, they were going to travel all the summer and stop at the best hotels, and that they got the money by selling their duplicate wedding presents. I wonder if my spoons are paying part of the expenses."

It is a bachelor who always knows how a child should be brought up, but he forgets it after marriage.

THE foolish man will ask a woman if her baby is not a trifle cross-eyed. But the wise man will take the train somewhere and make his inquiries by post-card.

"A PETRIFIED baby was recently discovered in Scotland." Unmarried men may believe this, but those who have seen a baby in motion know it is never still long enough to petrify.

A LITTLE girl noticing the glittering gold filling in her aunt's front teeth, exclaimed: "Aunt Mary, I wish I had copper-toed teeth like yours."

"WERE you ever caught in a sudden squall?" asked an old yachtsman of a worthy citizen. "Well, I think so!" responded the good man. "I've helped to bring up eight babies."

AN Irish magistrate asked a prisoner if he was married. "No," replied the man. "Then," replied his lordship, amid peals of laughter, "it is a good thing for your wife."

"I NOTICE that Robinson is dead," said Jones to Brown. "Did he leave any money?" asked Brown. "Oh, yes," replied Jones. "How much?" said Brown. "All he had," replied the wag.

SAILORS tell us some marvellous stories about the beauty of the seas. Mr. Scupper says he was once in a ship off Cape Horn where not only was the sea green, but the winds blew.

IN this country, when the suitor of the heiress of vast domains tells her that he loves the very ground she treads on, you man generally believe him. He does.

DOCTOR: "Tell me exactly what your condition is. Do you have night sweats?" Patient: "Yes—almost every night." Doctor: "My dear sir, this begins to look serious. About how long do they last?" Patient: "About as long as I have to carry the baby up and down."

A GENTLEMAN having brought an action for assault his servant was called as a witness to support it, and, after a few questions, observed that he was certain if his master had not a very thick head the blow which the defendant gave him would have cracked his skull.

HARD TO BEAT—A china egg.

"It is criminal to kiss,"

Said the beautiful miss,

And the youth, with effrontery sublime,

Kissed the maid and said,

"There! If I'm hanged I declare

It will be for a capital crime."

A GIRL was showing her rural cousin the Christmas presents she received, and the latter particularly admired a gold watch set with pearls. "But here is a gift," said the girl, taking up a book, "that I value more highly than all the other presents combined." The rural cousin took the book and read the title, "The Dissection of the Atomic Theory in its Relation to Evolution."

"I WONDER what becomes of all the pins?" said a girl to her best young man, last evening. "I know where a great many of the sharpest ones go," he answered. "Indeed!" she exclaimed. "Pray tell me." He softly withdrew the arm that encircled her form, and gazing ruefully at several scratches on his wrists, pointedly observed: "They go to waist." The next time he called she wore a sealskin jacket.

A REPORTER in the House of Commons wrote: "John Bright then entered—on his head a white hat, upon his feet large but well-polished boots, upon his brow a dark cloud, in his hand his faithful walking-stick, in his eye a bland expression saying nothing." To his great disgust, the paragraph was printed thus:—"John Bright then entered on his head, a white hat upon his feet, large but well-polished boots upon his brow, a dark cloud in his hand, his faithful walking-stick in his eye, a bland expression saying nothing."

OVERHEARD in a barber's shop:—Bald-headed man (who inclines to be facetious): "I'm getting to be pretty bald, ain't I? Suppose you'll have to cut my hair for about half-price here, after, eh?" Tonsorial artist (who is equal to the emergency): "Oh, no, sir; we always charge double when we have to hunt for hair!"

READ AND RUN.—Smith keeps a savage dog on his premises, and near its kennel a board is displayed with the warning in large letters, "Beware of the dog." "I suppose," said Jones, pointing to the warning, "you have painted that sign in large letters so that 'he who runs may read.'" "No," said Smith, "but that he who reads may run."

ANNOYED father (to his wife): "I cannot conceive, my love, what is the matter with my watch. I think it must want cleaning." Little daughter (speaking hurriedly, but triumphantly): "Oh, no, papa, dear! I don't think it needs cleaning, because baby and I had it washing in the basin for ever so long this morning!"

A BASHFUL WOMAN.—A good story is told of a young married man who, during his "court- ing" days, was very bashful. One day he was invited to attend a tea-party at the house of a pious uncle of his sweetheart, and when seated at the table, the good-bosses requested him to ask a blessing, which so "broke up" the already bewildered young man that he unconsciously stammered out: "I don't care for any, thank you."

"DON'T you think she's pretty?" said the fond mother to the father, as she stroked the baby's silken hair. The father was in a sulky mood; something had disagreed with him, and he replied, somewhat curtly: "Oh, all babies are about alike. They look like little monkeys." Just then a neighbour entered, and, taking the baby on her lap, said: "Mercy on us! how like its father that child is!"

"WHY is it that the employes in telephone offices are all ladies?" Mrs. Brown made this inquiry of her husband. "Well," answered Mr. B., the managers of the telephone companies were aware that no class of employes work so faithfully as those who were in love with their labour, and they knew that ladies would be fond of the work in telephone offices." "What is the work in a telephone office?" Mrs. B. further inquired. "Talking," answered Mr. B.

UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS.—"See here!" said an angry citizen to a quack doctor; "that 'wonderful discovery' of yours for preserving the scalp is a fraud." "Why so?" "Look at that," he went on, removing his hat, "since using it I have lost all my hair." "Oh, it doesn't pretend to preserve the hair," replied the doctor, "only the scalp. You've got your scalp left. You mustn't expect too much of medical science."

A GOOD ENOUGH INCOME.—"You appear to be gay and happy," said Tompkins to Algonnon Brown, whom he met at a ball. "You look well fed, are well dressed, and all that. Must have a good income, I presume." "Oh, yes!" replied Brown. "I can't complain. I have my salary—eight hundred. Then I make a couple of hundred by my literary labours; that makes a thousand. Then I run in debt a couple of hundred; that makes twelve hundred. A single man that couldn't subsist on that ought to be ashamed of himself."

MR. BOOTMAN, whose ear and understanding are more practical than poetic, had a new customer recently. "Oh, Mr. Bootman! I just heard the sweetest thing about Miss de Stella. She wears in one play a pair of slippers made of hair from her own head. Could you make me a pair like that?" "I never tried it, but I believe I can do it." "I am so glad! I have the combings at my room. Make them in any style you choose. Remember, I give you *carte blanche*." "Oh, any kind of a cart will do. Send one load round this morning."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES at the meet of the Four-in-Hand Club was attired in a costume of olive-green Irish poplin, her daughters being dressed alike in brown cashmere. The Duchess of Teck, whose genial face it is a pleasure to see again amongst us, was in black, trimmed with lace.

THE EMPEROR OF GERMANY, who was at latest dates convalescent, has not recovered so quickly from the influenza cold with which he was attacked some little time ago. His daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden, who has been on a visit to her august relative, has been unremitting in her attention to the aged Emperor, as well as the Crown Princess and her daughters.

THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR and Madame and Mlle. Staal and Count Alderberg passed the holidays at Eastwell Park, as guests of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh.

THE COMTESSE DE CHAMBORD, who has been visiting her sister, the Archduchess Beatrice, has returned to Frohsdorf in improved health.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES will visit Leeds on the 14th, 15th, and 16th July, when they will open the new buildings of the Yorkshire College.

ALL the Royal and ducal party from Florence are looking well and bronzed by their Italian residence. The Princess Mary Adelaide, however, seems to have benefited the least, as the climate never thoroughly agreed with her constitution. The Duke of Teck and his daughter (who is now about to make her debut in society, and is both handsome and accomplished) are to be seen among the riders every morning in Hyde Park.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES recently opened the Holloway Sanatorium near Virginia Water, which has been built and endowed at a great outlay by the late Professor Holloway and his heirs.

THE COUNTESS OF DUDLEY, accompanied by Mrs. Montgomery, has gone to Freshwater, Isle of Wight, for change of scene, her health being much shaken by her recent bereavement.

THE LATE PRINCE IMPERIAL.—The anniversary of the death of the Prince Imperial was marked by the holding of a special Mass at St. Mary's Church, Chislehurst.

THE QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS has presented two magnificent *Sèvres* vases, exhibited at the Antwerp Exhibition, to President Grévy.

DUKE CHARLES THEODORE OF BAVARIA, M.D., brother of the Empress of Austria, has just returned to his villa at Tegernsee, where besides an eye infirmary the Duke has also opened a free hospital. It is hardly necessary to add that he not only gives his services gratis, but even supplies the poor patients with medicine, money, clothing, &c. While in Meran this Royal surgeon made no less than 130 operations on eye patients; only two of which (incurable cases) turned out unsuccessfully.

THE Roman papers, which always overflow with admiration of Queen Marguerite, have been lately particularly impressed by the toilettes worn by that august lady during her visit to Naples. At the Court ball she had on a train and corsage of rose-coloured velvet, skirt of satin of the same tint, embroidered with silver; on the corsage was a perfect cascade of diamonds; the short sleeves were fastened by two brooches of pearls and diamonds, from each of which a string of large pearls fell, and was fastened round the arm just above the elbow; a coronet of pearls and diamonds. At the Duchess of Montaleone's theatricals the Queen wore a train and bodice of sky-blue velours epinglé, the latter being studded with dragonflies and butterflies of brilliants; in her hair were real white roses and diamond stars.

STATISTICS.

DOGS IN IRELAND.—By a return recently published, it appears that £33,957 4s. was received in Ireland during 1884 for the licences of dogs alone. The number of dogs represented by this sum is 339,572.

DECREASE OF EMIGRATION.—During the five months ending the 31st ult., there left the United Kingdom for places out of Europe 86,504 persons of British origin, 23,833 foreigners, and 1,031 persons whose nationality was not distinguished, the total being 111,368. Compared with the five corresponding months of the previous year, this shows a falling off of 25,760 emigrants.

THE SALVATION ARMY.—At the annual meeting of the Salvation Army, General Booth stated that in the United States no less than 600 Salvationists were in prison. In 1878 the "Army" had only 81 corps; to-day it had 1,050. In 1878 it had only 127 officers to carry on the war; to-day it had 2,650. In 1878 it had no "outposts" in the villages; to-day it had 662. In 1878 it had one newspaper and some small monthly magazines; to-day it had 22 separate publications.

GEMS.

To be happy the passion must be cheerful and gay, not gloomy and melancholy. A propensity to hope and joy is real riches; one to fear and sorrow, real poverty.

The end of life is to be like unto God; and the soul following God will be like unto him. He being the beginning, middle and end of all things.

Those with whom we can apparently become well acquainted in a few moments are generally the most difficult to rightly know and understand.

AFTER a tongue has once got the knack of lying, it is not to be imagined how almost impossible it is to reclaim it. Whence it comes to pass that we see some men, who are otherwise very honest, so subject to this vice.

KEEP your eyes turned inward upon yourself, and beware of judging others. In judging others a man labours to no purpose, commonly errs, and easily sins; but in examining and judging himself he is always wisely and usefully employed.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO MOULD.—Whisk three eggs with two ounces of sugar and a little grated lemon-peel, then stir in a pint of cream and enough grated cold potatoes to form a very thick batter, which must be so stiff that it will not drop from the spoon. Bake in a well-buttered mould.

BREAKFAST MUFFINS.—Whisk three eggs, and mix with them one breakfastcupful of milk, one tablespoonful of butter, melted, one tablespoonful of sugar, a pinch of salt, and two heaped teaspoonfuls of baking powder, flour enough to make a batter; bake in round tins. When almost done, wash the top of each with a feather dipped in milk.

QUEEN'S PUDDING.—Soak a pint of bread-crumbs in boiling milk, add the yolks of four eggs well beaten, and sugar to taste. Bake in a pie-dish. When cool, spread jam on the top, and over that the whites of the eggs beaten to a stiff froth, with four tablespoonfuls of white powdered sugar. Put into the oven, and bake a very light brown. If liked flavour the frothed whites with lemon or vanilla.

VEAL PIE.—Take some of the neck, cut up in small pieces, season with pepper and salt, and put in a few pieces of ham off the cushion, also some hard-boiled eggs cut in pieces, and (if liked) forcemeat balls. Cover with a good crust, and bake. When done pour in some good gravy.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE life of a man consists not in seeing visions and in dreaming dreams, but in active charity and willing service.

A TIN POCKET.—Fortunes acquired by illicit distillation have given rise to a very curious taunt among the inhabitants of the northwest of Ireland. When it was intended to convey to any person in the strongest possible manner that his pride in his family circumstances was only that of an upstart, the common expression for this was, "Your grandmother was a Doherty, and wore a tin pocket." The origin of this saying was as follows: The northern part of the county of Donegal, particularly in the district of Innishowen, is largely peopled by persons of the name of Doherty and O'Doherty. In past times one of the best means of smuggling poteens into Londonderry and other towns in the vicinity was by a tin flask carried by the women in their pocket. Hence the expression.

CARE OF CANARY BIRDS.—It is not generally known that draughts of cold air are as unwholesome for a canary bird as for a child. Many a pet bird has drooped and died a mysterious and lamented death for the lack of a little thought on the part of its mistress. Many birds suffer also from heat; their cages are hung so high that while the room does not seem too warm for the mistress it is very uncomfortable for the bird. Cages have sometimes hung so near to the fireplace that the wires became so heated as to be unpleasant to the touch. If one has not the time to be thoughtful and careful of pets it is more humane to dispose of them to some one who can be.

THE GOOD OF CONTRASTS.—"How beautiful it is this morning, Cicely, my dear," said her "chum," as she called for her to take a morning walk. "You will wear your new spring suit to-day, of course?" "No, indeed." "But I've got on mine." "That just the reason. Don't you suppose I know the power of contrast. I shall wear my new suit alongside of a rusty winter suit when I do wear it." "Then I shall have the advantage this time," was the reply. Somehow, it had never seemed in that light to Cicely, and, rather than give her friend such an obnoxious opportunity, she donned the new suit, and the two sailed up the street like Greek goddesses modified by modern fashion.

A SENTIMENTAL WEDDING PRESENT.—At a recent Japanese wedding the most prominent gift was a mountain formed of rolls of white and red floss silk, the ends of each roll being tied with parti-coloured twine in hard knots, emblematic of the indissolubility of the marriage tie. The floss silk typified gentle but enduring constancy, the strength of the skeins contrasting with their softness and flexibility. Round the base of the mountain were ornaments of fresh rice straw, plaited into the forms of storks and tortoises of longevity, and the pine bamboo and plum of perpetual bloom, while into the loops of the plants were thrust pieces of the dried bonito fish, a favourite accompaniment of wedding presents, its name, "Kitsu-wo boshi," being a homonym for the three Chinese characters signifying victorious, manly and brave.

PUBLIC BATHS.—The public baths of Vienna are said to be the finest in the world. The building is situated in the heart of the city, and incloses a basin five hundred and seventy feet in length by one hundred and fifty-six feet in width, and varying in depth to twelve feet. The enormous quantity of water contained in this basin is renewed three times a day. The whole establishment has accommodation for fifteen hundred persons, and is open from May first to October thirty-first, and from five in the morning until dusk. There is also a bath restricted to ladies, open from nine in the morning until one; and the Vienna ladies are especially good swimmers.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. S.—False whiskers are held in place by loops of fine wire passing over the ears.

C. P.—Bathing the nose and closed eyes with spirits of camphor and water will relieve you.

R. H.—Singletick is a capital healthful exercise, and may be learnt from any drill-sergeant.

G. T.—The tartar has been allowed to remain too long upon the teeth to be erased by anything but scraping. Consult a dentist.

F. W.—Thanks very much for your kind letter. We are glad you like the story. Yes, the characters are taken from life.

B. H.—Coal is a fossil, so you have lost your bet. We are sorry for you, but advise you to be less positive next time.

C. D.—“Oh, happiness! our being's end and aim,” is the first line of the fourth epistle in Pope's “Essay on Man.”

H.—We have heard it said that a needle held between the teeth will prevent the eyes from aching or watering when peeling onions.

N. M.—If we were to give you the address of a dealer in old books, it would be a violation of our rules which forbid the insertion of business addresses.

T. R. T.—1. Questions of a religious nature cannot be discussed here. 2. You had better refer the legal queries to a local solicitor.

W. L.—Your writing will be improved by practice. Get a few good copy-slips, and write from them daily, paying particular attention to the formation of each letter.

A. T. S.—1. Go to one of the hospitals, and, no matter how much pain you may have to suffer, undergo the operation at once, as delay is dangerous in such a case. 2. You can make what return you please.

C. P.—You might get a position as a book-keeper, provided you thoroughly understand the art. Good penmanship is not the only recommendation for a position of that kind.

J. D. B.—The third finger of the right hand is considered the proper one nowadays upon which to place the engagement ring, although some authorities claim that distinction for the index finger of the same hand.

M. L.—1. Dark brown hair. 2. If a lady is engaged it would not be improper to receive presents from her future husband, and she can also act as his savings-bank without overstepping the bounds of propriety.

L. C. L.—It is a look of a dark auburn hue, and we fall to see any reason why you should feel ashamed of the possession of such beautiful hair. The penmanship displayed in your note is of a very high order of excellence.

C. V.—A burn is generally more serious than a scald. Apply flour thickly over the part, bandaging it with strips of linen. Relief will be at once experienced. Cotton-wool is also excellent in such a case, but flour is generally more handy.

H. Y.—1. A couple of hunters would be necessary, a pair of carriage horses, and say two for ordinary use. This is the least you could do with under the circumstances. 2. Advertise in the *Field*. 3. About sixty pounds.

F. F.—1. Satin or moire; a brocade would look well for the body and trimmings. 2. Nun's veiling or cashmere is the most suitable during the present season. 3. The hat looks well if made to match the dress, though it is now de rigueur. Thanks for good wishes.

C. H.—1. Give arrow-root for a time, and then again try milk. 2. An excellent rice-pudding without eggs is made as follows: One tea-spoon of rice to a quart of milk, sweetened to taste; place in a very slow oven, and bake for a couple of hours, until done.

T. H.—May and June are the months in which moths lay their eggs. It is well to examine any fur or winter clothing that may be laid by. Placing a shallow vessel, filled with turpentine in the wardrobe or clothes closet will destroy moths and all other insects.

D.—Bodily exercise and fresh air are the most important items in the rules of health. You say that you have been detained at home for three weeks, and that your occupation is a dentary; no wonder that you find yourself growing stoutish and your complexion becoming “muddy.”

L. L.—Give your husband mutton broth and light puddings. To make mutton-broth, remove the skin and fat from two pounds of either the loin or neck of mutton, place in clean saucapau, with two quarts of water. After it has biled, skim it, and let it simmer by the side of the fire for an hour; remove all fat.

K. C. C.—The origin of railways is traced to a contrivance for simplifying the transit of coal from the mines in Northumbria and Durham to the places of shipment on the Tyne and Wear. The invention consisted of a double parallel line of wooden beams or trams, fixed to the ground and furnished with flanges to prevent the wheels of the cars from slipping aside. The motive power was furnished by horses. The date at which these roads were first used is not down by good authorities as between 1602 and 1640. In 1760, long slips of iron were placed on the wooden beams, in order to prevent the excessive wear and tear. This was

far from satisfactory, and about 1740 cast-iron rails fixed in parallel lines on cross wooden sleepers were substituted, this species of railway becoming pretty general in mining districts between 1745 and 1775. The first locomotive was the invention of Richard Trevethick, an ingenious, but eccentric engineer, and it was run successfully on the Merthyr-Tydvil Railway, in 1804, although it was far from perfect. George Stevenson, however, was the first to bring the locomotive within halting distance of its present state of perfection.

F. G. B.—It would be useless for any one but a practical batter to attempt to stiffen and otherwise renovate a felt hat with any degree of success. Greasy spots may be removed by the application of fuller's earth or of beeswax.

D. N. T.—Many artificial flowers are coloured with poisonous materials, such as mixtures of arsenic or of lead, and the colour from them cannot be recommended for use as skin beautifiers in the manner one is led to believe you intend—that is, to redden the cheeks.

L. M. A.—1. You are a decidedly attractive brunette, and have undoubtedly caused many heartaches among your male friends and acquaintances. 2. Dark-brown hair. 3. Handwriting and composition are both of a very high order of merit, showing careful and conscientious training.

C. R.—Laundry people have various processes for producing the gloss on shirt-fronts, but they refuse to enlighten outsiders. A stent iron plays an important part, and these are propelled by girls who serve an apprenticeship before being qualified to iron shirts, collars, cuffs, etc.

THE KEY-NOTE.

Some are watching; some are waiting,
Some are thinking, some debating,
Others planning; lift the curtain,
Nearly all, you'll find, are certain,
Claiming it to be a free note's
That they'll sometime find the key-note.

Key-note to all wealth and treasure,
Key-note to all ease and pleasure,
Key-note to the luck of others;
Like unto their “lucky” brothers;
Never happy, never thriving,
Growing grey in useless striving.

What this key-note is they know not;
What its force and sound they show not;
Where it came from, who hath made it,
Shaped and fashioned—ay, and weighed it.
On this subject they are fighty,
All they know “its power is mighty.”

Ah! poor souls, what hours are wasted,
And what sweets are never tasted—
Sweets that come of earnest labour,
Sweets for you and me, my neighbour,
Earned by muscle, bought with brain,
To be garnered like the grain.

M. K.

L. V.—1. To make ink powder, take one pound of nut-gal, seven ounces of copperas, and seven ounces of gum-arabic. Pulverise and mix. This amount of ink powder will make one gallon of good black ink. Two or three powdered cloves should be mixed with each pound of powder to prevent moulding. 2. No recipe of practical value for other colours.

T. P. W.—You might write to the young man and explain the manner in which the letter from your envious acquaintance fell into his hands. He should satisfy himself that you were in no way connected with it, and not condemn you off-hand, without affording any chance for explanation. Follow this advice, and we feel sure the matter will be satisfactorily settled.

L. H. H.—Choose for yourself between the two young men, but at the same time it would be well to find out whether there is not a good foundation for your mother's dislike for the light-haired one. It does not seem likely that she would be so decided in her condemnation of him had she not good reason for it. The look sent us is of a bright auburn, which might be called red by envious-minded persons.

F. W.—Asks us to tell her the meaning of the different kinds of kisses—namely, on the hand, the cheek, the forehead and the lips. A kiss on the hand is a sign of respect; on the cheek, affection; on the forehead, veneration; and on the lips, love. Some bright genius has happily said: “We kiss our daughters on the forehead, our sisters and cousins on the cheek, and our lovers and wives on the lips.”

L. R. I.—1. In time of war, yes, if he be of the proper age. 2. Elias Howe was the inventor of the sewing-machine. He had so far perfected his invention in April, 1845, after two years of patient labour, that he sewed a seam with it. By the middle of May it was completed, and he sewed the seams of some woollen suits. The sewing was so well done that it outlasted the cloth. The remarkable feature of the machine was, that Howe carried it further on towards its complete and final utility than any other inventor has ever brought a first-rate invention at the first trial. He secured a patent for it on Sept. 10, 1846. The original machine has been lately on exhibition in Baltimore, U.S. It has been allowed to remain just as it was created by Howe's skilful fingers. After constructing forty machines in the United States, he visited England in 1847, and remained two years. He returned to Boston

entirely destitute, and resumed his trade. From the period until 1854 he was involved in very expensive law-suits, when the principal infringers of his patents acknowledged his rights, and arranged to manufacture sewing-machines under license from him. His fortune realised from his invention is said to have amounted to £400,000. It is stated that when poverty overtook him in London he pawned the original machine for a short period. 3. The word grandmother will be found in Timothy II, chapter I, verse 5. Your good opinion of the paper is duly valued.

K. S.—Why are you dissatisfied with the emerald in your engagement ring? The emerald signifies happiness in love, and domestic felicity. Your lover probably had that in his thoughts when he presented it to you, and did not imagine how much better a diamond would have pleased you.

C. P.—Boil two parts of acetate of copper, and one part of bicarbonate of potash in eight parts of water until the solution is reduced to half its bulk; filter through a cloth, and you will then have a green ink that will undoubtedly prove satisfactory. The best kind of green ink requires a great deal of careful manipulation by an experienced person.

T. M. A.—Be guided by the advice of your mother, and do not allow anyone to persuade you to array your immature judgment against her ripe experience in the ways of the world. Your aunt should be more honourable than to advise deceit in a girl of fifteen years, and you should therefore close your ears to the voice of the tempter. Wait until you are eighteen or nineteen years of age before thinking of men and matrimony.

L. A.—As you have no proof of the death of your husband, it naturally follows that you are still his wife in the eyes of the law, and cannot marry until a divorce has been obtained. Even then it will be as difficult to prove desertion on his part as it would be to certify to his death. Our advice would be to consult a lawyer on the subject, and obtain from him instructions as to the best way to proceed. We do not know what would be the charges for such consultation.

A. G.—The proper time for young ladies to marry is when they feel competent to assume the responsibilities of matrimony. They should also be sure that the man of their choice is equally fitted to love, honour, and cherish them, and not marry offhand, with the mistaken idea that it is absolutely necessary to do so. It is far better for a woman to live a life of single blessedness than to blight her after existence by selecting a worthless husband.

H. H.—We commend your spirit for economising, but don't allow it to verge on the mean. We will gladly help you to the best of our abilities, and hope to hear from you again, especially when any difficulties press themselves. A stock-pot is the principal “save-all.” A furnishing ironmonger will supply you with one, and, when once its possessor, never let it lie idling by. By this means, from mere scraps you can have a constant supply of good, nutritious stock, which will form the base of all soups and gravies.

CHRY.—Perhaps these lines will gladden Thers' heart:—

“This maiden here is debonair;
High thoughts are hers and purpose fair;
Each wish she has, each act and deed,
Right frames and gives its proper need;
Each motion that she makes is grace,
Sweetly conceived to match her face
And figure, grace's dwelling place.”

E. LADYWELL.—The postage stamp filtration is as follows: Stamp on the left corner, upside down, I love you; stamp on the left corner, crossways, I love another; stamp on the left corner, straight up and down, I wish to be rid of your correspondence; the stamp placed at the bottom of the right corner, crossways, no; at the bottom of the right corner, upside down, yes; stamp on the left lower corner, do you love me? on the left lower corner, upside down, I am displeased; on the left lower corner, crossways, I wish to have your acquaintance; on the right corner, upside down, friendship; on the right corner, straight up and down, business correspondence; on the left side, in the centre, accept me as a lover; left side, upside down, I am engaged; on the left side, in the centre, crossways, who cares? in the upper right-hand corner, with the head towards the right, danger, or, we are watched.

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